

ROGER A. BULLARD





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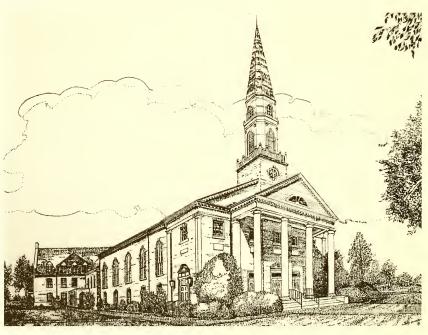
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Architect's drawing of church at Pine and Nash (Biblical Recorder)



Drawing of current sanctuary at Nash and Park



ROGER A. BULLARD

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Back: Migratory birds on river, Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge. (Photo by Steve Hillebrand, courtesy of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service).

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ERRATA

p. 63, lines 4-5: the Latin quotation should be italicized.

p. 89, note 20: for "defense" read "prosecution."

p. 154, 2nd paragraph, lines 3-4: delete "as well as... Irish."

p. 248, end of 1st full paragraph: for "too" read "too, on CD."

p. 311, end of 1st full paragraph: add "(John Stone is Kelley Garriss's father.)"

p. 318, 4th line from bottom: omit "1979."

p. 388, line 17: for "he" read "the."

p. 397, line 8 of 1st full paragraph, for "FBC" read "SBC."

p. 437, line 5 from bottom of text: for "Lewis" read "Louis."

p. 451, between Velásquez and Riley, add: "Gilberto Barbosa, July 14, 1996."

Abbreviations

ACC	Atlantic Christian College (after 1990, Barton College)
RR	Riblical Recorder Bantist state paper for North Carolin

BSU Baptist Student Union BTU Baptist Training Union

BYPU Baptist Young People's Union CBF Cooperative Baptist Fellowship

DCNB Powell, Dictionary of North Carolina Biography

ESB Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists

FBC First Baptist Church

FBN First Baptist News, a church newsletter

GA Girls' Auxiliary

N&O [Raleigh] News and Observer

NCC North Carolina Collection, Wilson Library, UNC at Chapel Hill

NCSU North Carolina State University, Raleigh

RAs Royal Ambassadors

RH Religious Herald, Baptist state paper for Virginia

SBC Southern Baptist Convention

SBTS Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (Greenville, SC, until 1877, then in Louisville, KY)

SEBTS Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, NC

SHC Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, UNC at Chapel Hill

WBC Wilson Baptist Church (prior to 1908)

WDT Wilson Daily Times (includes issues published under the title Daily Times)

WFC Wake Forest College, in Wake Forest, NC, until 1956, then in Winston-Salem

WFU Wake Forest University, Winston-Salem

WMU Woman's Missionary Union

Versions of the Bible

ASV American Standard Version
KJV King James Version
Knox Translation from the Latin by Msgr. Ronald Knox
NAB New American Bible
NEB New English Bible
NIV New International Version
NJV New Jerusalem Version
NRSV New Revised Standard Version

NRSV New Revised Standard Ver REB Revised English Bible RSV Revised Standard Version TEV Today's English Version

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Returning home, I simply must thank two other members of FBC Wilson. My wife "Carol, a deacon of the church at Wilson" (Romans 16:1, more or less), subjected these chapters individually and collectively to a critical eye, making things easier on readers and saving the author from a lot of embarrassment. Our pastor Doug Murray has provided steady encouragement. Thanks go to the History Committee and the Board of Deacons of FBC for their confidence and for making the book possible. Finally, copyeditor Christi Stanforth and designer Chris Crochetière worked their magic on the raw material I gave them and produced the book in your hands.

Preface

And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord GOD, thou knowest.

-EZEKIEL 37:3 KIV

HINK OF A PALEONTOLOGIST—one of those people who digs up and studies desiccated, fossilized old bones of creatures long, long disappeared. Here's part of a skull; this looks like a thigh bone. Could these be vertebrae? Look here! A pelvis! It's rare to find a whole skeleton. Almost never is evidence of soft tissue preserved. The most we can hope for is a few bones or fragments. Did this animal carry itself on two legs or four? How smart was it? What did it eat? How did it defend itself? How did it reproduce? Was it predator or prey? What's the relation of this beast to prehistoric creatures already known? The bones themselves don't carry much information. From them we might fashion an impressive articulated skeleton to display in a museum, but naked skeletons don't live and breathe and move from place to place.

The scientist can make inferences, however. From measurements of the skull and the brain case, of the length of certain other bones, or the manner in which they connect to other bones, he or she can tell the strength of the jaws, and whether the hind legs were used to support the animal's entire weight. The shape and positioning of teeth can reveal its diet. The sculpture of the skull indicates the positioning of the muscles that gave shape to the living head. The orientation of the eye sockets gives a good indication of whether this creature hunted for a living or spent its time trying to avoid being eaten. All this can give an artist ideas to work from, and he or she can paint a picture of the creature or sculpt its image in its original habitat. It's partly imaginative, of course—who knows what color it was? But let the scientist worry over those bones long enough, and an artist can draw a reasonably satisfying picture of the creature.

xii Preface

From our early history as a congregation, all we have are bare bones—written records of business meetings, most of them routine. What we want to know is what the church and its people looked like, what a sermon sounded like, what a worship service was like—the kind of thing that no one recorded because everyone knew those things. Today much of that is lost. But the historian can make inferences. We know what was going on in the world, the country, the state, and the denomination—what shaped the way people thought. We know how people have always reacted to certain stimuli. And there are sources besides the dry bones of church minutes. There were newspapers—in the early days, mostly weeklies. Some of the people we deal with left written records of their own, and sometimes people who knew them left records. In this book I have used any sources I could come across to put flesh on the bare bones, to imbue names with character and color.

Much information here is not footnoted. This may be assumed to come from conversations with church members, the church records, or from common sources that any historian or genealogist will recognize: the federal decennial census records, death certificates, city directories, military records, ship's passenger lists, selective service registrations, cemetery records, the usual tools of the trade. I have tried to give careful documentation to sources that would not be evident to others. The source notes are streamlined, but they will direct any interested persons to the bibliography, where full details will be found.

Socially acceptable terms for people of African descent have changed over the years: "Negroes," "colored people," "blacks," "African Americans." In this book I have used all these terms, applying each to the eras where that particular term would have been appropriate. In the earlier chapters I speak of "Negroes" and "colored people" because in the early decades of our history these were the terms used in polite discourse. In later chapters I leave these terms behind, just as the language did. So also with other usages: "Miss" or "Mrs." versus "Ms."; "boys" and "girls" versus "young men" and "young women."

I perhaps owe a word of apology to any readers who do not have a personal background in our Wilson community. I often speak of people and places and events that will be familiar to most readers—Fort Macon, Franklin Street in Chapel Hill, Josephus Daniels, Dick's Hot Dog Stand, and so on—but will mean nothing to others. I have not tried to explain these references lest I burden the narrative. Sorry about that. When clarification has seemed really necessary, however, I've tried to work it in.

Every history is an interpretation. The very act of choosing what to include and what to exclude interprets the story. I have probably not gotten it all right. I hope at least I have the facts straight. I want readers to be aware that all interpretation found in these pages is purely mine. Neither the church

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nor any of its officers is responsible for ideas expressed here. If anyone takes exception to what I have said or not said, they should take it out on me, not on First Baptist Church.

Joseph Blount Cheshire, one-time beloved bishop of the Episcopal Church in North Carolina, expressed my feelings quite well in a book of reminiscences he wrote.

"All I can claim is that I desire and purpose to say the truth, so far as I know it. But to tell the truth is really a more difficult task than one would suppose who has not tried it."



Chapter 1

The Harnessing of the Horses

May 5, 1860

Harness the horses, and get up, ye horsemen.

-JEREMIAH 46:4 KJV

HEY HARNESSED THE HORSES in Warren County, and in Nash. In Kinston and Goldsboro and Greenville, and even up in Virginia, the clergy adjusted the bridles and reins. Baptist preachers going to a meeting. Nothing unusual about that—that's what Baptist preachers did back then—but this would be a small gathering in a little town most of them had probably never visited. In May 1860 few people outside the area had reason to know of the little market town that called itself Wilson, home to 960 people and seat of the newly formed Wilson County. But there had been a call. Letters had gone out to several preachers of good reputation from two local merchants in their late thirties, W. W. Winstead and R. H. Blount, inviting them to attend the formation of a new Baptist church at the local courthouse on May 6. Preachers answer calls, and they were coming.

There was certainly scheduled stagecoach service to Wilson by this time, but the gentlemen more likely used their own horses and perhaps buggies. Any preacher, lawyer, or physician pretty well had to own a horse and a two-wheeled sulky or "dog-cart" for ordinary travel needed in their professions. It's possible, however, that some traveled part of the way by train. Those coming from the north might have gone to Weldon and caught the eleven o'clock departure on the Wilmington & Weldon Railroad. If the train was on time, they would have arrived in Wilson at 1:33 P.M. If they were coming from

Goldsboro, they could have left the station there at 6:30 P.M. and arrived here at 7:45. Young as it was, Wilson was proud to be a railroad town.¹

Josiah Bridges Solomon was coming south from Warrenton. He had been pastor of the Baptist church there since 1852 and was already well known in local Baptist circles, but his influence would reach much further before his death in 1906. He was born in Franklin County in 1824 and graduated from Wake Forest College in 1851. While still a student, he was ordained by the Haywood's Meeting House in 1848. One of the participating clergy was William Hooper, of whom we will hear much more later. After graduation he worked as a missionary with the North Carolina Baptist state mission board. He helped found four churches during that time, but Warrenton was his first pastorate.²

The folks in Warrenton remember him this way: "Without being handsome, Mr. Solomon had a strikingly intellectual face. He was well educated, was possessed of much general and technical learning, was a strong reasoner, a logician of power, knew Hebrew and Latin and was especially proficient in Greek." Apparently JB, as he seems to have been known, got into some controversy with the local Methodist preacher while in Warrenton, and came out on top. At least he baptized a good many Methodists into his church. In fact, a lot of people joined that church during Solomon's stay there, many in 1853 when an English evangelist, J. S. Reynoldson, conducted a revival. Services were held during the week at midday, and the town's businesses and schools would close for the event. On the way back to England, Reynoldson was lost at sea when his ship went down.³

Solomon was the owner of six people, apparently one family. The oldest was a sixty-year-old woman, the youngest a one-year-old girl. His father had owned thirty. Solomon left behind some extensive information about his ancestry, with a long, fond recollection of his father. He devotes a page to his father's slaves, including a particularly intriguing encounter with "Uncle Jack," a kind of prophet, who seemed to see coming what Solomon described as "the dreadful and unholy war between the States." 4

Soon after his visit to Wilson, Mr. Solomon accepted the pastorate of the Leigh Street Baptist Church in Richmond, where he served during the years of the Civil War. When wounded soldiers began arriving in Richmond from the Virginia battlefields, the Leigh Street church basement as well as the Solo-

- 1. Wilmington & Weldon R. R. Company, Time Table No. 5, 1859.
- 2. Rone, Owensboro's First Church, 134–135.
- 3. Montgomery, Sketches of Old Warrenton, 198-199.
- 4. See http://familytreemaker.genealogy.com/users/w/i/l/Joe-M-Williams/FILE/0012page.html. Also J. B. Solomon to Frank Solomon [cousin], March 15, 1909 [1899], at http://familytreemaker.genealogy.com/users/w/i/l/Joe-M-Williams/FILE/0015page.html. The date on the letter, which is a copy, is 1909, but obviously in error. Mr. Williams tells me the correct date is 1899.

mon home served as medical stations. Like many other residents, he gathered his family and abandoned the city on December 25, 1864, when the capture of Richmond seemed close at hand.5 He returned to Warrenton, did farm work. and taught school for a while. In the fall of 1866 he visited Robert E. Lee in Virginia to invite him to attend the dedication of a memorial to his daughter who had died in Warren County during the war. The general was not able to attend. but Solomon describes an emotional conversation.6 JB was professor of English at West Virginia State University in Morganton from 1870 to 1873, also preaching at the local Baptist church. From there he went to Pennsylvania, where he served two churches, Jefferson from 1873 to 1875, and Sharon from 1875 to 1880. He was very briefly presi-



Josiah Bridges Solomon (North Carolina Baptist Collection, Z. Smith Reynolds Library, Wake Forest University)

dent of a short-lived institution in Greene County, Pennsylvania: Monongahela College, which, although of Baptist sponsorship, sought to train ministers on a nonsectarian basis.⁷

J. B. Solomon returned to the full-time ministry in 1880 as pastor of FBC of Owensboro, Kentucky, which he served until 1885. Their church historian writes that "Dr. Solomon was a Christian gentleman in every respect, and was rarely excelled as a preacher. He was logical and systematic, yet with a fine sense of imagery." §

- 5. James, *Leigh Street Baptist Church* 1854–1954, 30–32; Harvey Hatcher to J. William Jones, April 8, 1867, in Jones, *Christ in the Camp*, 494.
- 6. J. B. Solomon to Daughters of the Confederacy, Henderson, NC, undated. Confederate Papers 172, unit 13, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, UNC-Chapel Hill.
- 7. Serinko, *California State College*, 28. This institution is in Pennsylvania and is now called California University of Pennsylvania. I have given dates for his stays in West Virginia and Pennsylvania that sound most reasonable to me. Sources are conflicting. He may have been at Monongahela College after his stay in West Virginia. See Taylor, *Tar River*, 310; Lasher, *Ministerial Directory*, 684; Thompson, *Sharon and Wise*, 72–73.
- 8. Rone, *Owensboro's First Church* and *A History of the Daviess-McLean Baptist Association in Kentucky*, 348–349. According to Rone's history, Solomon was awarded the DD degree by both Bethel Baptist College in Russellville, KY, and Southwestern University (now Union University) in Jackson, TN. Bethel, a woman's

He later served several other churches in Kentucky and Indiana⁹ before spending his last years with his son in an upscale Chicago neighborhood, and then with his daughter and son-in-law, the superintendent of the local school system in Henderson, Kentucky. He died there on November 2, 1906.¹⁰

But for now, the thirty-six-year-old Mr. Solomon was on his way to Wilson. He had written an encouraging answer to the invitation:

Warrenton, NC April 12th, 1860 Messrs. Winstead & Blount: Dear Brethren:

Your favor of the 6th Inst. came to hand two days since, communicating the requests of the brethren that I would be in Wilson on the 1st Sunday in May at the organization of your church. Having considered the matter, I see nothing now to prevent my compliance with your requests. The Lord willing, therefore, I shall expect to be with you on that occasion, & hope then the pleasure of forming the personal acquaintance of the brethren.

Permit me to say to you that I rejoice very much that you have a prospect of forming a church in your village, and whether I shall be able to be with you or not, I hope the Lord may meet with you & make it a season of joy and prosperity long to be remembered.

Please present me kindly to the brethren whom you represent, especially brethren I. Harris & Randall if still in your town.

With sentiments of Christian regard, I remain yours In the faith of the gospels,

I. B. Solomon.¹¹

college at the time, is now defunct, and Union has no records that date from that time.

^{9.} Zion Baptist Church, outside Henderson, KY, 1885–1887; 1889–1992 at Huntington, IN; Hawesville and Lewisport, KY, two nearby towns, from 1893 to 1896; and Cannelton, IN, just across the Ohio, from 1896 to 1899. Lasher, *Ministerial Directory*, 684. Again the sources conflict. The records of Zion Baptist Church have nothing about Solomon other than that he was there 1882–1884. This conflicts with other sources.

^{10.} Rone, Owensboro's First Church, 134–135, and Taylor, Tar River, 309–310. James, Leigh Street, mistakenly gives the place of death as Henderson, NC. A long obituary appeared in BR, December 19, 1906, along with a portrait, a photograph taken in his later years.

^{11. &}quot;The 6th inst." refers to the 6th day of the present month. Isaac Harris was a

Elder Levi Thorne would make his way to Wilson from Kinston, where he was pastor of the Baptist church. Mr. Thorne too was pretty well known, even at age thirty-five. Before going to Kinston, he had been one of the first pastors of the Baptist church in Chapel Hill.¹² While in Kinston, during the Civil War, he somehow managed, with the approval of Governor Zebulon Vance, to travel to Baltimore to procure one hundred thousand Bibles and testaments from the American Bible Society for the use of North Carolina troops in the Confederate service. This represents about one-third of all such literature that found its way south during the war. Religious books usually came south during the war by way of Baltimore or Memphis.¹³ Thorne excitedly wrote the governor of his success:¹⁴

Baltimore, Maryland
Dec 7th 1863
To His Excellency Z. B. Vance
Governor of North Carolina,
Sir:

With unfeigned gratitude to God, I write to inform you of the great success with which the Lord has crowned my efforts for procuring Bibles & Testaments for the N Carolina troops. The Board of the American Bible Society has made a *donation* of *one hundred thousand copies*.

I stated to the Board that by *your personal influence* I obtained permission to come North. I also added that it would give you great pleasure if my request could be granted.

If you would forward to me an expression of your appreciation of the Board's magnanimous action, I will forward it immediately.

Your humble svt Levi Thorne

Governor Vance may well have replied, but there is no record of it in his papers.

Actually, Thorne's journey was longer than one might expect, because he had been born in England, where his father before him had been a Baptist

twenty-seven-year-old merchant in Wilson but at the time a member of Solomon's church. Randall is unidentified.

^{12.} George T. Purefoy, A History of the Sandy Creek Baptist Association, 285.

^{13.} Daniel, "Bible Publication and Procurement in the Confederacy," 200; Jones, *Christ in the Camp*, 151; see especially Dwight, *Centennial History*, 258–267.

^{14.} Levi Thorne to Zebulon Vance, December 7, 1863, in Zebulon Vance Papers; Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library, Duke University, Durham, NC.

preacher. The family arrived in Baltimore when Levi was quite young. He studied medicine there and was baptized at the High Street Baptist Church of that city. For some reason he turned away from medicine, undertook a course of study at Granville College (now Denison University) in Ohio, but then turned to theology at the Western Baptist Institute in Covington, Kentucky. His first pastorates were at Harpers Ferry (then in Virginia) and the Maryland towns of Cumberland and Waverly. Then he made his way to North Carolina, where he served the church at Chapel Hill before moving to Kinston.

After the Civil War, he would move to New Bern to serve that church as its pastor in 1870–1872 and again in 1875. The people there liked him but could not meet his demands for salary, although an affliction with malaria was certainly more important in this Englishman's decision to seek healthier climates. On leaving the church in New Bern, he moved to Milford, Delaware. Later he served a church at Goshen in the mountains of Virginia.

Thorne is said to have been a devout man, conscientious in his duty. A close friend reflected that there were three things about him that kept those who did not know him well from recognizing the greatness of his character: he tended to be despondent, he was as naive as a child, and he spent his whole life in ill health. A few weeks before he died he wrote a friend, asking if he might find a country church for him in the North Carolina mountains. His last days were spent in Baltimore, the city where he had entered the country. The last religious service he attended was a watch-night service on New Year's Eve of 1878. His last intelligible words were the asking of a blessing at table. Then he had a stroke, and, already sick with the malaria he had tried so hard to escape, that was pretty much it. He died January 22, 1879. 17

Down from Battleboro in Nash County came fifty-two-year-old Joseph G. Barkley. Born in Northampton County, he spent his ministry preaching at small churches—at least eleven of them—in Halifax, Northampton, and Nash Counties. He was something of a missionary in the Tar River and Pamlico Associations, but he pretty much supported his family on his own farm. He owned four persons, evidently a single family. The oldest, Annie, was one hundred years old. The youngest, an eighteen-year-old man, was on the run in 1860. During the Civil War Barkley spent some time preaching

^{15.} On the Western Theological Institute, see Riggs, "Memoir of Hon. Jas. W. Lynd," 109. Microfilm records of this institution are in the Kenton County [KY] Public Library.

^{16.} First Baptist Church Dedication Services (New Bern, 1943); Cook, In the Beginning—Baptists!; records of FBC, Milford, DE.

^{17.} Obituaries in BR, March 20, 1879, and RH, March 12, 1870.

^{18.} Taylor, *Tar River*, 196; obituary, *BR*, May 6, 1896.

to soldiers in the Army of Northern Virginia, baptizing a good many in the Rappahannock River. Alexander Betts, a Methodist chaplain in the Confederate army, later remembered some of his preaching. Elder Barkley was not a well-educated man, and his success came more from hard work than from brilliance. His preaching is described as "acceptable." Betts also recounted that he visited in the Barkley home once in 1887 or 1888, and "the dear old man" told him that the happiest day in his life was "one day in 1840, when I saw my oldest daughter marry a young man and start to Africa!" 19

His last pastoral duty was speaking at the funeral of a neighbor woman he had known a long time. Afterward he suffered a stroke. He survived for five years, dying in 1896, at eighty-seven years of age.

Up from the Baptist church at Goldsboro rode Elder George William Keesee, who served as pastor there from January 1859 till his death in July 1861. Keesee was a native of Richmond, born June 26, 1831, and an 1851 graduate of Richmond College with further study at the University of Virginia. Basil Manly, Jr., later one of the original four professors at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, had been one of his teachers. He was ordained at the Hicksford (now Emporia) Baptist Church and was its pastor until his move to Goldsboro. He had a successful ministry there, bringing the church out from under a considerable burden of debt and establishing it as a stable and growing congregation. An above-average preacher, he laboriously wrote out every sermon, although he delivered them extemporaneously.20 He said he couldn't think without a pen in hand. In fact, when he answered the call to come to Wilson, he urged the brethren there to let him know in advance what was expected of him, for "ministers are not always prepared to preach on any particular subject, if I may judge others by myself. Fix up, then, a schedule, and let us have it." He was a model pastor, kind and cheerful, faithful at visiting the poor and the sick.

The year after he participated in the establishment of the Wilson church, he fell seriously ill with typhoid fever and died only three days later, on June 20. He asked bluntly whether he was dying. When told he was, he said he wanted to live only to preach the gospel. Just before he breathed his last, he recited and joined those around him in singing a hymn by Charles Wesley:

And can I yet delay My little all to give? To tear my soul from earth away For Jesus to receive?

^{19.} Betts, Experience of a Confederate Chaplain, 13, 26.

^{20.} Jones, Virginia Portsmouth Association, 262–263; obituary, BR, July 24, 1861.

Nay, but I yield, I yield; I can hold out no more; I sink, by dying love compelled, And own Thee Conqueror.

Though late, I all forsake; My friends, my all, resign; Gracious Redeemer, take, O take, And seal me ever Thine!²¹

He had been married less than two years. He was buried in Richmond.

Brother John Henry Lacy also made ready for the ride to Wilson that day in May 1860, coming down from Scottsburg, Virginia. He probably did this as part of a visit to Battleboro, so that his wife Olivia and their two children could spend some time with her parents. You see, Olivia Lacy was the daughter that J. G. Barkley proudly told Alexander Betts about, the one who got married and went off to Africa. John and Olivia were married on May 1, 1853, and on July 5 of the same year set off from Boston with another missionary couple, Mr. and Mrs. J. S. Dennard, and their leader, Thomas J. Bowen.²² This was the first mission that the Southern Baptist Convention sent to Africa, other than sending Bowen himself, who had gone alone in 1850 but was forced to return for health reasons. Sickness struck the mission as soon as it landed in Lagos, and the Dennards were ill for a week. When they were able to travel, the little group had a frightening journey upriver to their destination. There were hostilities between the local people and the British at the time. After some close calls, during which the men armed themselves, they made it to their station. The Lacys stayed only three months. They returned home on the advice of an English navy physician, as John was losing his vision.²³ It's not unreasonable to speculate that the young couple had a nasty time adjusting to the local culture, but Bowen himself mentions only the

^{21.} Sung to the tune BOYLSTON, most familiar to us as the tune to "A Charge to Keep I Have."

^{22.} Bowen describes the difficulties of their voyage and problems on arrival in London in a letter to *African Repository* 24, no. 11 (January 1853): 334–335.

^{23.} Taylor, *Virginia Baptist Ministers*, 339–340; obituary, *RH*, May 19, 1881; Pinnock, *Romance*, 100; Meyer, "T. J. Bowen and Central Africa," 254. Bowen, described as "a swashbuckling, Indian fighter missionary" (Anderson, *Evangelical Saga*, 64), was forced to return in 1859, and eventually he gave in to mental as well as physical illness. After working as a missionary in Brazil until 1861, he served as a chaplain in the Confederate army, but later was committed to the Georgia State Hospital for the Mentally Ill, where he died in 1875 (Pinnock, *Romance*, 109; Meyer, *Farther Frontier*, 32).

threat of John's going blind.²⁴ They certainly have to be given credit for fortitude. The Dennards both died of disease the very next year. It seems incongruous today, but in the States the Lacys kept slaves; in 1860 they owned six people. It was the issue of slave owners becoming missionaries to Africa that had caused the split between Baptists of the north and south in the United States and led to the forming of the Southern Baptist Convention in 1845.²⁵

Elder Lacy served a number of churches in southern Virginia after his return, including Danville, Greenfield, and Chatham. He lost Olivia in 1866, and the once-vigorous man spent his last years as an invalid. He died March 24, 1881. His last words, which he could hardly enunciate, were "Glory. Glory."

Elder Henry Petty made his way from Greenville, North Carolina, where he was pastor of the Baptist church. He was born in Virginia in 1828 and, after the early death of both parents, was raised by his mother's brother. After his service in Greenville he was pastor of the church in Warrenton and of several churches in Virginia. He enjoyed writing and even wrote a novel, *Lena Landon*, which was published by the American Baptist Publication Society in Philadelphia. He lost his hearing a couple of years before he died in 1904.²⁷

As the brethren made their way through the countryside to Wilson, road-side honeysuckle would have been blooming, the morning air heavy with the fragrance and vibrant with birdsong. They trotted past the smallholdings of yeoman farmers, who made a living off the land by growing subsistence crops: corn, sweet potatoes, collards, peas. Fruit was beginning to form on the peach trees. The main cash crops were the pine trees, sources of tar and turpentine. They passed by acreage farmed by more prosperous planters, where slaves were at work in fields of bright leaf tobacco, a crop that had become increasingly important in the last few years. A lot of cotton was still being grown, but no soybeans at all. Any livestock was penned in by wooden rail fences; barbed wire was still several years in the future.

Some other invitations were issued. One went to Thomas R. Owen of Tarboro, who could not get away from his teaching duties at the Tarboro Academy. A trip to Wilson would not simply be a weekend excursion in those days, even from Tarboro. We will hear more of Mr. Owen later.

^{24.} Collins, Baptist Mission, 7–8; Bowen, Central Africa, 179–180.

^{25.} Southern Baptist historian McBeth writes: "Slavery was the main issue that led to the 1845 schism; that is a brute fact" (*Baptist Heritage*, 381–391). See also Barnes, *Southern Baptist Convention*, 12–42; Todd, "North Carolina Baptists and Slavery."

^{26.} Obituary, *RH*, May 19, 1881; Taylor, *Virginia Baptist Ministers*, series 3, 339–340.

^{27.} Taylor, Tar River, 286; Taylor, Virginia Baptist Ministers, series 5, 108–109.

One hundred forty-five years later, on another side of time and on the other side of the world, near the southwest tip of India, a fisherman named Prakasan set out to sea in a new boat to resume his business, which had been interrupted by the vicious tsunami of December 2004. The boat was white, and its name was written on the bow in proud blue letters: WILSON BAPTIST.

The journey those eastern North Carolina preachers began that day in 1860 would stretch a long way. What follows is the story.

Chapter 2

The Length and Breadth of the Land

1663-1860

Arise, walk through the length and breadth of the land, for I will give it to you.

—GENESIS 13:17 RSV

JOOK AT A MAP OF NORTH CAROLINA. If you draw the proper inferences, you can easily understand why this state, until recent years, has had the smallest percentage of its population foreign-born. Those wide-reaching, constantly shifting barrier islands we call the Outer Banks prevented any reliable contact from the ocean. Among the British colonies, North Carolina alone had no great, inviting port. We had no Charleston or Savannah, no Boston, New York, or Philadelphia, to say nothing of the rich ports of the Chesapeake Bay area in Virginia and Maryland. People did not come from Europe or Africa to North Carolina. They came to North Carolina from other colonies, mostly those to the north. While the Scots-Irish were coming down the mountains from Pennsylvania, New York, and Maryland, and various German groups were coming southward into the Piedmont, our eastern part of the state was settled for the most part by people of English background seeping down from Virginia, along with the African people they owned.

Eastern North Carolina was the first part of the state to be settled by anyone other than the natives, but when the first permanent settlement existed and where it was located is not known, though it was probably in Bertie County. The early settlers were largely descended from people who entered the continent in Virginia, often as indentured servants. They served their

time, then went seeking land of their own. Many came south of the "dividing line" into North Carolina.

Some of the settlements in New England and the middle colonies were established for religious reasons. People came to America to be able to worship as they pleased in their own communities, although excluding anyone who wanted to worship in a way different from them. Others came seeking escape from conscription into military service, which to them was a religious reason. These included Quakers from England and pacifists from several German groups. Most people who came to Virginia and the Carolinas did it simply to better themselves. Some of the earliest arrivals came to make a quick fortune and then go back home and live like royalty. A few did just that, but many more died on these shores before ever gaining any wealth. Still, braving a hostile ocean and daring to face a mysterious new landscape with unfamiliar dangers took gumption, and when people did it simply for the opportunity to make a better life for their children and children's children than they could ever dream of achieving in England or elsewhere in Europe, it was a noble enough goal. We know more about the surface of Mars than those people knew about America. There are people today willing to brave the dangers of murderous deserts for the same reason—to make a better life for their families.

Those were rough people who came down to these parts. They had little education, little use for it, and even less use for religion. The sandy, swampy soils of the east made roads difficult and unreliable. There was no postal service at all. That stopped at the Virginia line. These conditions fostered the virtues of individualism and self-sufficiency, but with it a conservative, suspicious provincialism. One of our historians described these folk as "a strong, fearless, independent group, simple in tastes, crude in manners, provincial in outlook, democratic in social relations, tenacious of their rights, sensitive to encroachments on their personal liberties, and when interested in religion at all, earnest, narrow, and dogmatic."

In 1728 King George II ordered a survey of the boundary between Virginia and North Carolina. It was undertaken by William Byrd, who left a journal of his work. In it he comments on the lack of religious concern on the part of Carolinians. "They count it among their greatest advantages that they are not Priest-ridden.... One thing may be said for the Inhabitants of that Province, that they are not troubled with any Religious Fumes.... They do

^{1.} For a vivid description of travel conditions in North Carolina a century or so later, see Crittenden, "Overland Travel . . . 1763-1789." We may safely assume that conditions were even worse around 1700.

^{2.} Johnson, "Social Characteristics of Ante-Bellum North Carolina."

^{3.} R. D. W. Connor, quoted in Powell, North Carolina, 45.

not know Sunday from any other day." He correctly points out that in North Carolina marriage was a civil contract and that "a Country Justice can tie the fatal Knot there, as fast as an Arch-Bishop." (In 1699 the law made marriage a civil affair rather than religious, simply because there were so few clergymen around. Later in the 1700s the privilege of conducting a marriage would be confined to clergy of the Episcopal Church.) Byrd describes Edenton as "the only Metropolis in the Christian or Mahometan World, where there is neither Church, Chappel, Mosque, Synagogue, or any other Place of Publick Worship of any Sect or Religion whatsoever." Whatever devotion the people have, he writes, they keep private, unlike their vices. The people are perfectly happy not to have ministers, because that way they don't have to pay them. 4

North Carolina was a religious vacuum. When in 1663 King Charles II gave the Lords Proprietors charge of a hunk of land that extended from Albemarle Sound down to what is now the Florida state line, he gave them responsibility for seeing to the established church. Dissenters could be given "indulgences and dispensations" to worship as they wished, but they were not exempted from taxes that supported the Episcopal Church and its ministers.⁵ The catch here was that there were no Episcopal ministers, let alone bishops. Byrd observed that when "missionaries" were sent over, it either proved that "the Priest has been too Lewd for the people, or, which oftener happens, they too lewd for the Priest. For these Reasons these Reverend Gentlemen have always left their flocks as arrant Heathen as they found them." This is pretty well confirmed by the Rev. C. E. Taylor, sent from England by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (SPG), who wrote, "I have therefore settled myself for a while in St. George's Parish, Northampton County, void by the Resignation of Mr. Barnet, one of the Society's Missionaries who I am informed has fled into Virginia being charged with crimes too base to be mentioned."7

The first serious religious efforts in North Carolina were undertaken by the Society of Friends, usually called simply the Quakers. The founder of the Quakers, George Fox, came to America with a missionary colleague, William Edmundson, in 1672. By May of that year, Edmundson was preaching in Perquimans County. Apart from whatever services may have been conducted at the Lost Colony, this was probably the first Christian preaching in the state, and there were a few converts. George Fox himself visited the area a few years later and was happy to find a good number of Quakers. The Piedmont, however, was the area of most fruitful work for the Quakers. Their work in

^{4.} Byrd, Histories of the Dividing Line, 68, 72, 96.

^{5.} Monroe, "Religious Toleration," 268.

^{6.} Byrd, Histories of the Dividing Line, 96.

^{7.} Quoted by Woodard, "North Carolina," 219.

Albemarle County became their center of gravity in North Carolina.⁸ Their cause was hurt by their opposition to bearing arms during the Revolution and by their anti-slavery stance during the Civil War, but they are still numerous in that part of the state and have done good work over the years with prison reform, care for the insane, and education. Guilford College is theirs.

When an SPG missionary, John Blair, came to North Carolina in 1704, he observed that as far as religion was concerned, there were four types of people here. First, Quakers. Second, people of no religion who would be Quakers if it didn't oblige them to live a moral life. Third, unemployed wanderers who go about preaching and baptizing without having any kind of church connection (any Baptists around would fit in this category). Fourth, "the better sort of people . . . really zealous for the interest of the Church" (the Episcopal Church, of course) and who would do something if they weren't so outnumbered by all those others.9 He considered North Carolina "the most barbarous place in the Continent." A few years later a couple more missionaries arrived in what is now Perquimans and Chowan Counties, and they ran into trouble from the "very numerous, extremely ignorant, unsufferably proud and ambitious and consequently ungovernable" Quakers. One soon returned to England, and the other died before he could get away.11 When Englishmen found North Carolina more of a culture shock than they could absorb, one can only sympathize with the Lacys for their situation retreating back to North Carolina from Nigeria.

There were Baptists around here and there. In 1703 SPG missionary George Keith wrote home urging that ministers (of the Church of England) be sent, for "if they come not timely the whole country will be overrun with Presbyterians, Anabaptists, and Quakers." In 1705 the chief justice of the province wrote to England, asking for five hundred copies of a certain treatise against the Anabaptists, because the country was swarming with them. The first Baptist church we know of was established in Chowan County by one Paul Palmer in 1727. A couple of years later Governor Everard wrote the Bishop of London to complain about him, saying that before Palmer showed up there were no dissenters around but the Quakers. He protests that he can-

^{8.} Woodard, "North Carolina," 217; Weeks, *Religious Development*, 25–31; Anscombe, *I Have Called You Friends*, 56–64; Moore, *Friends in the Carolinas*, 19–25.

^{9.} Woodard, "North Carolina," 216; Blair's report is given in Saunders, *Colonial Records*, 1:600–603.

^{10.} Pascoe, Two Hundred Years, 20.

^{11.} Pascoe, Two Hundred Years, 21.

^{12.} Pascoe, Two Hundred Years, 11.

^{13.} Pascoe, Two Hundred Years, 20.

^{14.} Williams, History, 210; Woodard, "North Carolina," 220.

not overcome the dissenters and get a true church (Episcopalian) established because he has a high official "that makes a jest of all religion & values not noe God, man, nor Devil," and delights in being an obstruction "to all religion & goodness." ¹⁵

The missionaries who came in following years were never adequately supported from London and received little help from the settlers. At times the Indians were hostile, although the traveling clergy were able to make a few converts among them. They had some success as well among the enslaved population, but the slave owners would not allow their Negroes to be baptized, since they were under the misapprehension that baptism would set their slaves free. 16 The success of the Episcopalian venture was not helped by a number of morally profligate missionaries who showed up in the province. An outstanding example was one Michael Smith, who found refuge in North Carolina after being chased out of South Carolina, but there were others as well.¹⁷ As late as 1740 the great Methodist evangelist from England, George Whitefield, who preached to receptive, enthusiastic crowds almost everywhere he went in the colonies, could write: "In North Carolina there is scarcely so much as the form of religion. Two churches were begun, some time since, but neither is finished. There are several dancing-masters, but scarcely one regular minister."18 Morgan Edwards was a Baptist pastor who, in and around the 1790s, gathered materials relevant to Baptist history in the colonial period. He refers to North Carolina as "this wretched province" and opines that the Baptists of North Carolina were the least spiritually minded of any Baptists in America.19

An English visitor to North Carolina in 1793 speaks of "a total neglect, not only of religious, but often of moral duties" in the southern states, where Sundays are spent "in riot and drunkenness." Like William Byrd, he singles out poor Edenton: "They have suffered a handsome brick episcopalian church, the only place of worship in the town, to fall into decay. . . . [It] is open to the carnivorous beasts which prowl about that country; and when the cattle have grazed, and hogs rooted in it, they retire to rest in the neglected church." The people had driven the minister away, and marriages were performed by a justice of the peace who, having indulged freely, "hiccups over a few lines, and this serves as a bond for life." As late as 1797 Joseph Caldwell, founder

^{15.} Governor Everard to the Bishop of London, October 12, 1729, in Saunders, *Colonial Records*, 3:48.

^{16.} Thomas Virgil Peterson, "Slavery," in Hill and Lippy, Encyclopedia, 731.

^{17.} Morgan, "Scandal in Carolina."

^{18.} Journals, quoted in Morgan, "The Great Awakening," 267.

^{19.} Quoted in Paschal, History of North Carolina Baptists, 1:123-124, 203.

^{20.} Janson, Stranger in America, 104.

of UNC, wrote from Chapel Hill, "In North Carolina, particularly in that part that lies east of us, every one believes that the first step he ought to take into respectability is to disavow, as often and as publicly as he can, all regard for the leading doctrines of the Scriptures." ²¹

A geographer of the times does not think very much of North Carolinians, either. "The inhabitants have very few places for public and weekly worship of any kind; and these few, being destitute of ministers, are suffered to stand neglected. The Sabbath . . . is here generally disregarded. . . . The citizens of North Carolina who are not better employed, spend their time in drinking, or gaming at cards or dice, in cock-fighting, or horse-racing. Many of the interludes are filled up with a boxing match; and these matches frequently become memorable by feats of [eye] *gouging*." The writer admits that the Quakers are around, and that the Methodists and Baptists are increasing, but concludes that most people "are literally, as to religion, NOTHINGARIANS."

Those were rough people.

But things were about to change, largely due to a couple of bona fide Connecticut Yankees. As early as the 1720s, the preaching of a Dutch Reformed minister in New Jersey had started revival fires burning in the colonies, and when this was followed by the fire-and-brimstone preaching of Jonathan Edwards in Massachusetts and the tireless travels of that cross-eyed Methodist evangelist George Whitefield up and down the colonies, the result was the movement historians call the Great Awakening. The movement's effect in North Carolina was mostly indirect, since the revival spirit had begun to wane in New England and the middle colonies before the fires were ever lit in this state. But lit they eventually were. By 1850 Methodism had become a strong movement, and Presbyterians had picked up strength, largely through immigration of large numbers of Scots settling along the Cape Fear River.

In 1755, two Connecticut men, Shubal Stearns (the leader) and Daniel Marshall (the follower), found their way to Sandy Creek, then in Guilford County. Stearns had been a Congregationalist and Marshall a Presbyterian when they were both deeply affected by one of Whitefield's preaching tours in New England. Not long after this Stearns became a Baptist. Marshall, who married Stearns's sister Martha, felt a call to preach to the Indians, and in the course of doing this he went to Virginia. There he fell in with a group of Baptists and the Marshall family joined them. Stearns moved south to Virginia, convinced that he was divinely led to do a great work there. He and his brother-in-law had a vision for Virginia, but things didn't work out, so they

^{21.} Quoted in Johnson, Ante-Bellum North Carolina, 331–332.

^{22.} Jedediah Morse, *American Geography*, 416–418. Jedediah was the father of Samuel F. B. Morse, inventor of the telegraph. Samuel used the word "nothingarian" in one of his writings.

headed still farther south and found themselves in what is now Randolph County, North Carolina.

"Sandy Creek" may not sound like a very promising place, but at the time it was an important and busy crossroads where three principal wilderness roads, or paths, met: the Settlers' Road, the Boone Trail, and the Trading Path. It was a good place to start a church, especially an English-speaking church. It was on a geographical funnel between German-speaking areas to the west and areas to the southeast populated by Gaelic-speaking Scots. "Pioneers might pass through Sandy Creek but once, but this would give them an opportunity to hear the gospel."23 Here, in 1755, Stearns and Marshall founded the Sandy Creek Baptist Church with sixteen members, all from Connecticut. Historian John Woodard calls this the most significant event in North Carolina Baptist history.²⁴ Indeed, the Sandy Creek Baptist Church, located at the intersection of Ramseur-Julian Road and Sandy Creek Church Road in northeast Randolph County and still going strong, is sometimes referred to, with some justification, as the mother church of the Southern Baptist Convention. Within seventeen years of its founding it had grown to over six hundred members and given birth to forty-two churches. In 1758 the Sandy Creek Baptist Association was formed—the fourth oldest Baptist association in the United States—and it dominated Baptist life in the two Carolinas and Virginia for the next several years.²⁵

Shubal Stearns was, shall we say, a forceful preacher. Young preachers often imitate the style of older preachers whom they admire, and many of the more than 125 young preachers sent out by Sandy Creek followed Stearns's style of "impassioned rhetoric and flamboyant gestures." A contemporary described his voice as strong and musical, at times soft enough to draw tears and then welling up to such force as "to shake the very nerves and throw the animal system into tumults." The effect was a vivid evangelistic fervor shared by the whole church. Women would speak and pray in public like the men. In fact, the Sandy Creek church had not only elders and deacons, but also "eldresses" and "deaconesses." Whereas the Catholic Church recognizes seven "sacraments" and contemporary Baptists conduct two "ordinances," the Sandy Creek Baptists observed nine rituals: baptism and communion, yes, but also the love feast, the laying on of hands, foot-washing, anointing

^{23.} Lumpkin, Baptist Foundations, 38.

^{24.} Woodard, "North Carolina," 220.

^{25.} Lefler, *North Carolina*, 129; William Lumpkin, "Sandy Creek," in Hill and Lippy, *Encyclopedia*, 699.

^{26.} Brackney, The Baptists, 13.

^{27.} Morgan Edwards, who did not particularly appreciate this type of preaching; quoted in Morgan, "The Great Awakening," 273.

the sick, the right hand of fellowship, the "kiss of charity," and the dedication of children.²⁸

Political events conspired to help the spread of this Baptist movement. When William Tryon became governor in 1765, he tried to impose a tax burden on the frontier people of the Piedmont to which these free-minded souls, already resentful of corrupt rule from the coastal counties, were not willing to submit. This led to the Regulator Movement—which any good history of North Carolina will discuss—and eventually to the Battle of Alamance in 1771, where the governor's militia dispersed an organized, armed group of protestors, of whom a good many were Baptists. As a result of the battle, many of the people in the area thought eastern civilization was pressing too heavily on them, and took to the road, westward into Tennessee and Kentucky, taking the Sandy Creek style of Baptist faith along with them.²⁹

But notice this: they went west, not east. Wilson is in the east. Our area would feel the effect of Sandy Creek, but not yet. Remember Paul Palmer and his church in Chowan County? The movement associated with that church would eventually evolve into the Free Will Baptists that are found all across eastern North Carolina.³⁰

Meanwhile, other Baptist churches began to pop up in the east, but most of these were not comfortable with the emotional, revivalistic manifestations of the Great Awakening and so were not of the same mind as the Baptists emerging from Sandy Creek. Most of the missionary Baptist presence in a swath of land including Maryland, Virginia, South Carolina, and eastern North Carolina represented what Baptist historian Walter Shurden calls the Charleston tradition, usually known as Regular Baptists. They favored orderly, sedate, dignified worship and were committed to education. These were our forebears.³¹

There were German-speaking Baptists in North Carolina, too. Even through the American Revolution and the Civil War they stood strong against participating in war and against slavery. These folks, called Dunkers by most outsiders, were fairly widespread in the middle colonies and eventually became the Church of the Brethren.

Sandy Creek-style Baptist churches did emerge in the east, however,

- 28. Morgan, "The Great Awakening," 272; Glenn Jonas, "Sandy Creek Baptist Association," in Powell, *Encyclopedia*, 1006.
- 29. Lumpkin, *Baptist Foundations*, 72–86; William S. Powell, "Regulator Movement," in his *Encyclopedia*, 957–958; Lefler, *North Carolina*, 171–178; Williams, *History of the Baptists*, 52–55; N. B. Cobb, "Baptist and Quakers." We will meet Mr. Cobb in the next chapter.
 - 30. Michael Pelt, "Baptists, Free Will," in Hill and Lippy, *Encyclopedia*, 104–106.
- 31. Shurden, "The Southern Baptist Synthesis"; William Lumpkin, "Regular Baptists," *ESB*, 1137–1138; Leonard, *God's Last and Only Hope*, 31–42.

especially in the English-speaking areas south of the Neuse. (Scots Gaelic was widely spoken around the Cape Fear River area. Even the Africans spoke Gaelic.) Shubal Stearns and Daniel Marshall themselves made several preaching tours in the area. The Episcopal establishment in the state never felt particularly threatened by local Baptists until this variety of Baptists began to appear. George Whitefield is quoted as saying, "My chickens have become ducks."

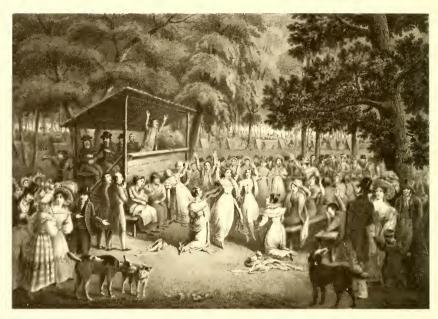
Whitefield died in 1770 and Stearns the next year. Religious fervor in the state dwindled and was especially dampened by the stress of the American Revolution following 1776 and the disruption of communities by the westward migrations that soon began. There were those who were longing for a new revival, however, and their prayers were answered. The fires this time were lit in Kentucky in 1800, when the first camp meeting was held. These were outdoor religious services that would last several days, attended by people who had come from great distances to camp on the grounds. Fiery sermons brought about spectacular results (sometimes fueled by alcohol) among the attendants, who would often fall into frenzies, trances, or jerk uncontrollably. Many, especially the Methodists, saw this as a manifestation of the Holy Spirit. One of our early members recalls a Methodist meeting he attended around 1838 in which people were shouting, wailing, standing on the pews and hollering, "Shout! Shout! The Devil's about!" Baptists were not that enthusiastic but went along. The movement soon spread into North Carolina, and camp meetings were being held all over the state in the early 1800s. They were often called union meetings, since Presbyterians, Methodists, Baptists, and others were involved. Methodists, followers of Whitefield, were the most enthusiastic about it. The movement was hard to criticize, since it produced converts, and many, many people were being brought into the churches. Still, Presbyterians would have preferred some more calm, orderly method. Baptists were willing to tolerate these practices, but remained suspicious and were happy enough to relinquish them when their time seemed to have passed. In those days Baptists thought of conversion as an intellectual decision one made with a clear mind, not as a reaction to temporary emotional upheaval. The entire movement is known to historians as the Great Revival or the Second Great Awakening. It reached its peak in North Carolina around 1805.35

^{32.} Paschal, History, 1:285-303.

^{33.} Quoted in Lumpkin, Baptist Foundations, 20.

^{34.} Harrell Family Papers, Atkins Library, UNC-Charlotte, collection 128, folder 2, 56–57.

^{35.} John B. Boles, "Great Revival," in Hill and Lippy, *Encyclopedia*, 356–358; Dickson Bruce, "Camp Meeting," in Hill and Lippy, *Encyclopedia*, 156–157; Williams,



Camp meeting ca. 1829 (Hugh Bridport lithograph, Library of Congress)

By this time Baptists nationally, including most in North Carolina, were beginning to organize themselves for educational and missionary purposes. On a national scale, the Triennial Convention had been organized in 1814, with Richard Furman of South Carolina as its first president. This did not sit well with many Baptists, however, particularly those of the Kehukee Association, which was founded in 1769 in Halifax County near Scotland Neck. These folk opposed anything they could not find in the Bible, and this included missionary organizations, theological seminaries, Sunday Schools, Bible societies, and professional clergy. But the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina was formed in 1830, after a slow development. Wake Forest Institute opened in 1834 and became Wake Forest College in 1838. Also in 1834 the prominent Baptist leader Thomas Meredith founded his periodical the Biblical Recorder, which has been published continuously ever since, except for a hiatus in 1842 and a shorter one in 1865. The influential Recorder was soon regarded as the voice of what were now called "missionary Baptists," to distinguish them from the anti-mission Baptists who simply could

History of the Baptists, 135–138; Weisberger, *They Gathered at the River*, 28–50; and especially Guion Griffis Johnson, "Revival Movements in Ante-Bellum North Carolina," 27–43.

not approve of these organizations and institutions.³⁶ These anti-mission people, largely connected with the Kehukee Association, came to be called the Primitive Baptists. These were the Baptists who were dominant in and around Wilson County by 1860. Patrick Valentine counts at least six Primitive Baptist churches and one Free Will Baptist church in Wilson County before the founding of our missionary Baptist congregation in 1860.³⁷

Although Shubal Stearns had been able to make some converts in the east, there were not many churches, mainly because the converts were so scattered. Interested people would travel over a hundred miles to hear Stearns preach, and be persuaded, but back home had no company. The great majority of Baptist churches in the state were rural. The Baptist State Convention in 1854 took measures to try to encourage the growth of churches in towns and villages. In the vast region embracing what are now Greene, Pitt, Lenoir, Martin, Edgecombe, Beaufort, Tyrrell, Hyde, Dare, Pamlico, and Wilson Counties, there was only one self-sustaining missionary Baptist church—the one in Greenville. "The Hardshell, Antimissionary spirit prevailed through Wilson, Martin, Edgecombe, Halifax and Pitt, and much of the preaching among them consisted of abuse of missionaries, Sunday schools and tract societies, and an educated ministry."

When the Baptists in the rest of the state considered the area in which we now live, what they thought was: "That is a mission field."

^{36.} Woodard, "North Carolina," 221–22; Anne Moore and James I. Martin, Sr., "Baptists," in Powell, *Encyclopedia*, 88–89.

^{37.} Valentine, *The Rise of a Southern Town*, 16. Charles Williams, in *History of the Baptists*, 210, states that at this time (in 1860) North Carolina had 692 Baptist churches, with 59,778 members. Presumably this includes all varieties of Baptists. A father-and-son team of writers, Cushing Biggs Hassell and Sylvester Hassell, wrote a history of the Kehukee Association, beginning with the creation of the world. Its title is *History of the Church of God from the Creation to A.D. 1885; Including Especially the History of the Kehukee Primitive Baptist Association* (Middletown, N.Y.: Gilbert Beebe's Sons, 1886). The text is 963 pages, of which the last 303 is the history of the Kehukee Association. Patrick Valentine (ibid., 51) informs us that the book contains the longest sentence in the English language (580–587), with 3,153 words. We shall take his word for it.

^{38.} Paschal, *History*, 1:313.

^{39.} Johnson, Ante-Bellum North Carolina, 342.

^{40.} Cobb, Autobiography, 37-38.

Chapter 3

The First Sabbath in May

May 6, 1860

Let us now praise famous men, the fathers of our people in their generations.

-SIRACH 44:1 REB

So they appointed a missionary.

His name was Needham Bryan Cobb, and he would make quite a name for himself in this state as a preacher, a poet, and—would you believe—a stenographer. He was the twenty-four-year-old son of a prosperous planter in Wayne County who was an "old Whig" in politics and a Universalist in religion.¹ Cobb attended UNC at Chapel Hill, where at his father's urging he studied agricultural chemistry, becoming proficient in soil analysis. He graduated in 1854, along with other privileged sons of North Carolina.² More important to him than the chapel service or the commencement exercise itself was the celebratory ballroom dance. The young ladies attending these graduation balls were often students at St. Mary's in Raleigh, and daughters of the state's political bigwigs, men who had spent "hundreds and thousands of dollars . . . in champagne, whiskey, apple brandy and 'possum suppers

^{1.} Most of the information about Cobb's life through the Civil War period comes from an autobiography he wrote for his son, late in life. It is unpublished, but a 102-page typescript is available at the North Carolina Collection at UNC–Chapel Hill.

^{2.} He also received an MA from UNC in 1856.

to secure an election." He pitied the poor students whose religious scruples would not allow them to participate. Called them bigots.

UNC required students to attend chapel services then, but Cobb was quite sure he never received any spiritual benefit, precisely because they were required. Yet during his senior year, this young Universalist who had contempt for the idea of inspired Scripture went to a Methodist revival meeting, "just for the fun of the thing." At the close of the service he found himself going up front to the mourner's bench, being prayed over by the evangelist, as indeed he was prayed over in his room the next day by one of his professors. His father simply scoffed, called it "animal excitement," and suggested that he grow up and learn more before making any commitment.³ And in fact, with time the vigor of the conversion experience lessened and Cobb's interest in girls resumed. After graduation he decided to study law, supporting himself with teaching at a place called Sleepy Hollow Academy in Cabarrus County. 4 He still felt a religious longing, however, and joined the Episcopal Church, all the while honest with the rector that he didn't feel quite right about it. The rector assured him he would grow comfortable with the faith, but he really didn't. He began a law practice in Goldsboro, but felt a call to ministry. He actually asked to be removed from the rolls of the church, but when he moved to Greenville to open an office there, he found he had been selected as a vestryman in the local Episcopal parish before he had even arrived.

Greenville had a Baptist church. Needham boarded at the same hotel as its young pastor, Henry Petty. They became friends, and Needham started attending the church, mainly because he was attracted to the young ladies who went there. Nothing wrong with that. But Petty was something of a challenge. Needham was always trying to prove by Scripture that the Baptists were wrong in their religion. Oh, he tried hard. He bought books defending infant baptism. He studied the Book of Common Prayer. But the deeper he went into it, the more he became convinced the Baptists were right: believer's baptism by immersion was the correct form. Still, he thought the Baptists were "an ignorant unrefined set of bigots." He went on to read up on the principles of church government and decided that, once again, the Baptists had it right.

So he gave in. His friend Henry Petty, pastor of the Baptist church in

^{3. &}quot;Animal excitement" did not imply comparison to an animal. It meant "irrational excitement." The word "animal" had a broader meaning then: sentiments arising from emotions rather than the rational mind. Old-time Baptist preachers often inveighed against this sort of thing.

^{4.} Folder 1 of the Cobb Papers contains several letters written from there. The Cobb Papers are basically those of his son Collier, but among them are good number of letters from Needham B. Cobb, as well as Needham's journals, diaries, etc.

Greenville, baptized him in the Tar River on October 30, 1859. He took down his shingle advertising his legal services and began to prepare for life as a Baptist preacher. He went to a prayer meeting at church soon after. He suspected he would be called on to pray, so he wrote out a nice prayer, using the Prayer Book and the book of Psalms as models, and tried to memorize it. He was indeed called on to pray, but he was so scared he couldn't remember his prayer. Someone else had to do it, and he could hear his friends snickering. He was mortified. He kept at it, though, until he became comfortable with praying aloud in church.

He married a Baptist, Martha Louisa Cobb—a distant cousin boarding in Wilson, who didn't even need to change her name. She had been so afraid that people would say he became a Baptist just to get her that she didn't even go to see him baptized. The girl's mother didn't really approve of the marriage. She was perfectly willing for her daughter to marry a respectable Episcopal lawyer, but a Baptist preacher—well, that was something else. But the wedding took place in 1859, in the home of the bride's mother in Pitt County, two days after Christmas. After a breakfast, the couple went by carriage to Needham's home in Wayne County, arriving at eight in the evening. They spent their wedding week there, then returned, in very cold weather, to Greenville, where lawyer Cobb closed his office and started preaching, under the auspices of what was then the Pamlico Association, as missionary for the ten counties between the Neuse and the Roanoke, and east of the railroad. He was promised an annual salary of four hundred dollars for his service.

Needham had a hard time getting used to preaching. He wrote his sermons out and read them to the people. Reading from a manuscript was not the best way to reach these people, and he had more success by meeting folks and talking to them one by one, giving them a tract if they could read. He met with considerable hostility from the Hardshell (Primitive) Baptists and Campbellites,⁵ as well as from the Episcopalians, who were especially strong in the county seats. His congregations were small and often illiterate.

On one particular occasion he had a meeting scheduled in Edgecombe County and found himself before a congregation that looked especially unintelligent. He hesitated to read his sermon to these people, but he didn't know anything else to do. (His text was 1 Corinthians 9:16. He used that same text, and probably that same sermon, quite a bit in the next few months.) He just couldn't preach extemporaneously. He took comfort, though, in knowing that Thomas R. Owen (whom we will meet later) had preached to this little group, and Cobb figured that Owen generally read his sermons, since he had

^{5.} The reference is to what is now the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). The "Campbellite" movement would now be known as the Campbell-Stone movement.

once been a Presbyterian. He tried to hide the manuscript with his tall silk hat,⁶ but as soon as the old ladies realized he was turning pages, they gave a contemptuous "Umph!" and started dipping snuff. One old brother simply went to sleep and snored. Loud. After the ordeal was over, a man came up and asked, "You haven't been at it long, has ye?"

"No," said I. "Not very long."

"I thought you hadn't, by your using dat paper."

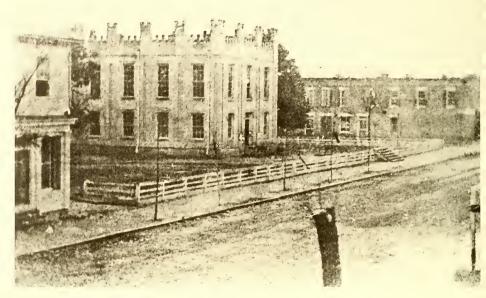
"Didn't Brother Owen use a manuscript when he preached here?"

"Use what? No, sir, he preached."

Needham Cobb decided then and there to approach sermons differently. He would work them out in his head and, if they were successful, write them down later. He developed a routine of spending about two weeks doing nothing but preparing sermons, and then traveling around his area, filling appointments to preach at various courthouses and schoolhouses. He could usually use one sermon at all the various places he would visit on one trip.

It was this missionary work for the Pamlico Association that in 1860 brought Needham Cobb to Wilson. Here he met people. He gave out tracts. He talked to people. He witnessed to them as well as a young inexperienced Christian could (to say nothing of a young untrained preacher). He identified a few missionary Baptists. He somehow got enough together to constitute a small congregation, and he preached here once a month. On January 22, from 1 Corinthians 6:20. On February 5, from Joshua 24:14. On March 4, from Proverbs 4:26, and on April 1, from Isaiah 55:10–11. The next month, on "the first Sabbath in May," as the church book has on its first page, he was in Wilson to meet with the distinguished presbytery of Elders Solomon, Lacy, Barclay, Thorne, and Perry. In those days Baptist preachers were called elders. Just as a group of lions is a pride, a group of elders is a presbytery. Baptists used the term freely, especially when dealing with an ordination, and there was to be an ordination at their meeting in Wilson: that of Needham Cobb himself.⁸

- 6. Cobb is described as a short man. In that day that probably meant around five foot five or six.
 - 7. N. B. Cobb's journal, box 23, folder 280 of the Cobb Papers.
- 8. There are four sources for our knowledge of the founding meeting of First Baptist Church. One is the brief account in the church record book. Another is an article in the *Biblical Recorder* for May 24, 1860. Another is the account given by Needham Bryan Cobb in his unpublished autobiography, and another consists of notes that appear here and there in his diaries, journals, and letters among the Cobb Papers. Unfortunately, the sources do not agree on all details. Even Cobb's journal does not agree in all respects with his own autobiography. The account given here seems to me to be the most likely reconstruction. For whatever frustrating reason, the microfilm reel of the *Biblical Recorder* for 1860 does not contain the crucial



Wilson County Courthouse ca. 1870 (Wilson Times)

The group of elders met on Saturday night at the residence of Richard H. Blount, a prosperous local merchant with no apparent further connection to our story. In the Blount home, the presbytery "examined" Cobb on his "religious experience, call to the ministry, and bible doctrine." A light spring rain probably fell during the night.⁹

The next morning at the courthouse, the elders met with the people who would constitute the new church. Elder Solomon opened the meeting with "religious exercises," and then Elder Thorne was elected moderator of the meeting, with Elder Keesee as secretary. Some technicalities ensued, during which the two most widely used Baptist confessions of faith, the New Hampshire Confession and the Philadelphia Confession, were read. This would have taken some time. The New Hampshire Confession was selected as the guide to doctrine. A church covenant and articles of Baptist church

May 24 issue. I must give special thanks to Julia Bradford of the Baptist Collection at Wake Forest University for allowing me privileged access to the precious original. Without her assistance the events of that day would remain obscure.

^{9.} R. B. Paschal, sheriff of Chatham County, records rain on the evening of May 5. Brewer-Paschal Papers, SHC 4609, folder 6.

order were then read from a book entitled *The Religious Denominations in the United States*, by Joseph Belcher, a prolific author on religious topics. Belcher was an American born in England, and a Baptist himself, but his upto-date discussion of the many American religious groups, including even the young Mormon movement, was considered fair-minded and thorough. One of the elders probably brought a personal copy with him for the purpose. There was another formality. A committee consisting of Barkley, Lacy, and Keesee examined the church letters of the ten "brethren and sisters" who wished to constitute the church and who subscribed to the Confession of Faith and Church Covenant that had been adopted.

Everything must have been in order. At eleven o'clock J. B. Solomon preached from the text 1 Corinthians 11:2: "Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you." After the sermon Levi Thorne gave the charge to the church—another address. Then each of the presbytery "gave the right hand of fellowship" to the twelve members of what was now the Wilson Baptist Church. There were certainly more people present than these, the elders, and Needham Cobb. The families would of course be there, and probably a good many others. The *Biblical Recorder* noted that there were about twelve other Baptists in Wilson who intended to join the new church as soon as they could get "letters of dismission" from the churches of which they were then members. As for a place to meet, a contract had already been let out for a "good house of worship."

Thus far our genesis. At this point belong the stately opening words of Exodus: "Now these are the names . . ."

There were Joseph H. Freeman and his wife Mary R. Freeman, who came from the church in Warrenton. They were both thirty-seven years old. Freeman was a tinner; he operated a shop that worked with sheet metal. The Freemans had four children, and a fifth would be born within the month.

George B. Ballinger, a twenty-eight-year-old engineer with the railroad, presented a letter from the church in Smithfield. He and his wife Sarah lived with the Alley family in Wilson, but Sarah did not join.

Isaac Harris came from the Warrenton church. He was a merchant in town, twenty-seven years old, with his nineteen-year-old wife Pattie. Pattie did not join.

William W. Winstead, thirty-seven, and Augusta Winstead, thirty-one, came from the Salem Church in Nashville. Mr. Winstead was a local dry-

^{10.} The BR article mentions ten, but the church book actually names twelve.

^{11.} The church records place Salem church in Nashville. There was also, however, a Salem church that is considered the predecessor of FBC of Rocky Mount. This may have been the same church.

goods merchant.¹² He and Augusta had six children, the youngest an eightmonth-old girl who had not yet been named. (She would be Verrena.)

John Farmer also came from the Salem Church in Nashville. There were three John Farmers in Wilson County at the time, so we cannot be certain of his identification.

William E. Farmer, a twenty-six-year-old brick maker, and his twenty-two-year-old wife Juliana also came from the Salem Church. Perhaps he was John's brother.

Another Winstead, William E., came from the Salem Church in Nashville. He may have been a farmer.¹³

Dr. William Junius Bullock came from Perry's Church in Nashville. He was twenty-six years old, with an MD from the University of Pennsylvania. He was unmarried at the time, but the next year he would marry Caroline Battle, the oldest daughter of the family with whom he boarded in Wilson. President Wait of Wake Forest College conducted the ceremony at the Battle home in Wilson on February 7. ¹⁴

Albert E. Upchurch, another local merchant, was about twenty-four. No information is given about his church letter, but he since he was born in Nash County, he may very well have come from the Salem or Perry's churches also. If he was not married at the time, he soon would be.

The new church went into business session, and after Brother Freeman gave an opening prayer, the group elected him moderator. Two deacons were "appointed" (the word "ordained" is not used): Joseph Freeman and William E. Winstead. ¹⁵ Three trustees were also appointed: John Farmer, Isaac Harris, and William W. Winstead. ¹⁶ John Farmer was appointed treasurer and Isaac Harris the church clerk.

A motion was passed that the church hold a prayer meeting each Thursday evening in a private home. Nothing is said about Sundays. The group had been meeting on the first Sunday of each month to hear Needham Cobb preach, but there is no record in his journal of his preaching in Wilson after this day. A motion was passed, however, that William W. Winstead continue

- 12. His store advertised regularly in the Wilson Ledger.
- 13. If he is to be identified with the William E. Winstead of Wilson County listed in Jordan, *North Carolina Troops*, 4:74.
 - 14. Wilson Ledger, February 12, 1861.
- 15. In another section the church book lists William B. Harrell as one of the first deacons, but the Harrells did not join the church until July 12, 1862.
- 16. Again the church book is inconsistent. At one point the trustee is named as William E. Winstead, also listing him among the deacons. But at another place which specifically describes the day's proceedings, William W. Winstead is called the trustee. The latter is more apt to be correct, since he can be identified as a man of substance in the community.

to keep in touch with Elder Cobb, presumably for advice on church matters. A third motion passed that the Wilson Baptist Church present itself for membership in the Tar River Association.

Elders Barclay and Lacy left during the afternoon, but in the evening the rest of the presbytery met, at the request of the Greenville church, to ordain Needham Bryan Cobb to the ministry. Elder Keesee delivered the ordination sermon, and Elder Thorne gave the charge to the candidate. There was a laying on of hands, and young Needham was now Elder Cobb. The ordination seems to have been conducted under the aegis of the newly formed Wilson Baptist Church. The Greenville church does not record it, and Henry P. Green's history of FBC at Dunn, where Cobb was once pastor, indicates that Cobb was ordained by the Wilson Baptist Church. That information could only have come from Cobb himself. This would mean that the ordination of a man who would later become a distinguished North Carolina Baptist leader was the first act in our church's history.

A lot was accomplished that day.

The next week, on May 18, the Republican National Convention, meeting in Chicago, nominated Abraham Lincoln as the party's candidate for president in the November elections. All around the country, but especially in the South, people were whistling a new song introduced the year before at a minstrel show in New York: "Dixie's Land."

As it turned out, Needham Cobb never received all the \$400 he was promised. The association did pay him \$300—in Confederate money—but his clothes, horse, and rockaway (buggy) cost him \$380. He had to feed himself and his horse out of his own resources while on the field.

When war broke out there were differences within Cobb's family. The father was a Unionist Whig anti-secessionist, 17 but all the sons, Needham included, were "hot for war." Most of North Carolina opposed secession, but this sentiment changed overnight when President Lincoln called for a couple of regiments from the state. The Cobb brothers all went into Confederate service, Needham as chaplain with the Fourth Regiment of North Carolina Volunteers, which later became the Fourteenth North Carolina Infantry Regiment. He finally preached his first extemporaneous sermon on the stone steps leading down from the parapet at Fort Macon, a month before North Carolina seceded from the Union.

Taking his "slave boy Alvin" with him, he went into service as chaplain of the Fourth North Carolina Regiment in Virginia, where many soldiers were immediately taken down with measles. He did some brush arbor preaching, attended by as many soldiers who cared to come. Many attended sim-

^{17.} This does not mean he was against slavery. He owned between sixty and eighty people to work his holdings.

ply because a lot of young ladies from nearby churches would be present. The officers took no interest in the services, and on one occasion a colonel "shocked the whole audience by thrashing and cursing his negro man for not currying his horses, in full view of the audience," while Cobb was preaching. Soon after the first battle of Bull Run he conducted his first baptism, the candidates being twelve Negroes who had been converted in a recent revival of religion among the colored people of the area. Neither the white nor the Negro churches in the area had a pastor.

Soon after Bull Run, after three months of service, Cobb resigned his commission. There was some dissatisfaction about pay and rank, and Cobb felt betrayed by one of his officers. He returned to Goldsboro as a civilian and became pastor of the local church, where he ministered to many of the Confederate sick and dying in local hospitals. The state convention made him superintendent of colportage work for North Carolina troops, distributing Bibles, tracts, and other religious literature. His memoirs contain some extended and vividly gruesome battlefield descriptions of the wounded and dead and some rich reminiscences of community disruptions at home in the aftermath of the war. The man was good with words. There is a particularly poignant account of his accompanying his father to Richmond to look for Needham's three brothers in the army. There were reports of their being wounded or dead. Eventually all were accounted for, although one had lost a leg.

That was in the summer of 1862. In December he was back home when Union forces advanced on Kinston and the military hospitals in Goldsboro filled again. He went back and forth between home and the Virginia front and at one time traveled to Alabama on business for his father, trying to claim payment for some land and slaves that had been sold but never paid for. He distributed his literature all along the way. In 1863 he was at Gettys-

18. Folder 282 of the Cobb Papers contains an inch-thick "commonplace book" of Cobb's. Between a couple of pages is a folded-up letter, written in pencil on cheap paper, in which he begs for money to buy Bibles and religious literature for his colportage work with the troops. It may have been meant for publication. The paper is folded so as to make four pages. The letter is two and a half pages long. The bottom half of a page is torn off, but nothing is missing. This is often found in letters of the period, apparently to save the scrap of paper for other use. Sometimes when a long letter was written, the writer would finish a page, then turn it at a 90-degree angle, and write across what he had already written. Then he'd do the same on the back page. If after thus writing four pages on the two sides of the paper he had more to say, he would attack the margins and start writing around the page. Paper was hard to come by in the Confederacy after the blockade became effective in late 1862. See Coulter, Confederate States, 213–214.

burg with the North Carolina troops in General Lee's army, staying with them through the Pennsylvania campaign. He was actually in the Confederate army for only about three months, but as colporteur for the North Carolina Baptist State Convention he was often at the front distributing Bibles, tracts, and lots of copies of the Biblical Recorder. Some may not have considered that a pressing military need, but it probably was appreciated by some of the soldiers who would have welcomed any kind of reading matter. Also, we must give him credit for considerable bravery by putting himself at great risk, if not of bullets and bayonets, of smallpox and measles by going in and out of the sick wards during breakouts of these diseases. After all, over twice as



Needham Bryan Cobb (Ashe, Biographical History of North Carolina)

many Civil War soldiers died of disease as died of wounds. He wrote an especially moving account of his caring for a slave who came down with small-pox. Cobb himself had been vaccinated against smallpox.¹⁹

After the Battle of Bentonville, Cobb sent his servant Alvin off with Johnston's Confederate troops, telling him he could have his freedom if he'd kill three Yankees. Alvin said he would, but of course he didn't. When Johnston surrendered, Alvin hired himself out to a Union officer and moved to New Orleans. Cobb wrote praising Alvin's reliability and said, "I am glad he obtained his freedom without killing any Yankees." ²⁰

Cobb was later pastor of a good many Baptist churches in North Carolina and Virginia, but he became known for other things as well. He was one of the first people in the state to learn shorthand and was occasionally called on to record political speeches or court proceedings. For short periods he

^{19.} Cobb's autobiography goes only through the Civil War. For more on his service, see Clark, *Histories of the Several Regiments*, 4:607, with portrait in vol. 5 opposite 705; Jones, *Christ in the Camp*, 343; Betts, *Experience*, 36, 64. Information on his later life comes from Samuel Ashe's article on him in the *Biographical History*, 5:134–140, and John Woodard's article on him in *DNCB* 1:92–393. See also Taylor, *Tar River*, 218–220. There are also many letters from his later years to his son Collier in the Cobb Papers, Southern Historical Collection, UNC–Chapel Hill.

^{20.} Cobb, Autobiography, 94.

taught the subject in Raleigh, at UNC, and at Wake Forest. Unfortunately for historians doing research, he kept a lot of his own notes in shorthand.²¹ The last ten years of his life he spent on his farm in Sampson County, milking three cows and trying to be a farmer, without too much success.²²

Cobb was something of a poet, and he managed, with the help of his son Collier, to get some things published as *Poetical Geography of North Carolina*, *Cold Water*, *Reply to Gray's Elegy, and Other Poems*. The poem "Poetical Geography" is a long, remarkable tour de force in which almost every creek, stream, and sound, every mountain, hill, and valley in the state, is forced into rhythmic, sometimes rhyming lines. The book is in East Carolina University's Eastern North Carolina Digital Library and can be read online at http://digital.lib.ecu.edu/historyfiction/item.aspx?id=cop. His own copy of the book is in the North Carolina Collection at UNC–Chapel Hill. On the front flyleaves, written in Cobb's own hand, is a poem he composed on the death of Jefferson Davis. One of his religious poems can be found as an appendix to this church history.²³

Needham Bryan Cobb had fifteen children—twelve by Martha Louisa, who died in 1859, and three by Ann Fennell. One of his sons, Collier Cobb, later a member of our church while teaching in Wilson, became an important figure in his own right. As a geologist he wrote many papers for scientific journals and National Geographic and taught geology at UNC. In the nineteenth century geology was the most exciting and popular of the sciences. A couple of his letters to his father reveal how pleased he was that a few young women were studying geology and paleontology with him. Along with Professor William Poteat at Wake Forest, Collier Cobb was one of the first to introduce North Carolina to the thought of Charles Darwin. He knew Darwin's granddaughter, as well as the daughter of Aldous Huxley, one of Darwin's champions. He was a devout Baptist, faithful in church attendance wherever he lived, but also an "evolutionist from turret-stone to foundationstone," and in his dislike of religious bigotry, he was close in some ways to his grandfather's universalism.²⁴ In his scientific work he traveled the world, also indulging his keen interest in photography. At his home in Chapel Hill,

^{21.} It is not Gregg shorthand, though it was a widely used method at the time. It may very well be that there is no one now living who can read it. See Chesnutt, "Short-Hand in North Carolina," and "History of Shorthand Writing in North Carolina," in *Biennial Report*, 516–520.

^{22.} Letter to Collier Cobb, box 3, folder 33 of Cobb Papers.

^{23.} It is taken from John E. Cobb, Cobb Chronicles, 135.

^{24. &}quot;Evolutionist": lecture titled "Organic Evolution," folder 206 of Cobb Papers. Bigotry: letters to his father of February 9 and September 5, 1890, folder 7, and of May 9, 1902, folder 33.

Collier hosted his father when came to attend the fiftieth reunion of his old college class. That must have been a warm, splendidly happy occasion.

One of Needham Cobb's last sermons was at the fiftieth anniversary of the Fourth Street Baptist Church in Portsmouth, Virginia, where he had once been pastor. He died shortly afterward on May 31, 1905, about a month after his son Collier lost his wife.²⁵

^{25.} Some remarks made at his funeral are found in folder 273 of the Cobb Papers. R. C. Lawrence, who knew Cobb in his old age, wrote a remembrance of him in *BR*, January 31, 1940.

Chapter 4

A Time of War

1860-1867 (Thomas R. Owen)

Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

-MATTHEW 18:20 KIV

THE LITTLE GROUP that was now the Wilson Baptist Church left few footprints in the sands of time for the first few years. On Thursday evening, August 23, 1860, the Tar River Baptist Association, meeting in Franklinton, after "due examination" of the church covenants and articles of faith, approved the Wilson Baptist Church for membership. This implies that the church had indeed been meeting at least from time to time since May of that year, perhaps only at Thursday evening prayer meetings. There is an entry in the church book for "Sunday Morning 7th, 1860." If the date is correct, this would have been October 7. On this occasion "the Brethrening of Wilson Baptist Church met and organized," which is to say, the men held a business meeting. A building committee was appointed consisting of George Ballenger, W. J. Bullock, and John T. Barnes. Barnes is not listed as a member of the church but was the young sheriff of Wilson County.

The members were well aware, however, of big movements going on elsewhere in the country. On November 6, Abraham Lincoln won the election. North Carolina cast its votes for John Breckenridge of Kentucky, who nar-

^{1.} Minutes of the . . . Tar River Association . . . 1860, 4.

rowly beat out John Beil of Tennessee. Votes for both of these candidates, however, were solidly pro-Union. North Carolina clearly did not want to leave the Union, and when South Carolina did on December 20, it caused North Carolina a lot of worry. While some were ardent for secession, most people wanted to watch and wait—wait to see if Lincoln actually did anything to threaten the South or the institution of slavery.

The new year came in with North Carolina still waiting and watching. On January 16 Wilson Baptist acquired its first property when Joseph Freeman "sold" the church a lot on Green Street for one dollar. On Sunday January 20 we held a business meeting³ and appointed a committee of four men to collect old subscriptions and get new subscriptions. This would refer to pledges to a building fund. Members were depending on donations from people outside the little congregation to provide much of the financial impetus for erecting a house of worship. This was not unusual. In 1859, communicants of St. Timothy's Episcopal Church sought such contributions and received generous sums, most of them from Primitive Baptists. 4 No doubt some of our little number contributed to St. Timothy's building fund, and no doubt members of St. Timothy's returned the favor. At this January session, the church also decided to have preaching on the first Sunday of each month, as it had done when Needham Cobb preached here on the first Sundays of 1860, January through April. William Farmer was appointed to "attend to the Church and furnish everything necessary for the Church and the Church to pay him for his services." This apparently refers to the erection of the first church building. Also, Isaac Harris asked for a "letter of dismission." Apparently he was leaving town. In those days taking physical possession of a letter from one's church, indicating good standing, was simply one of the preparations a Baptist made for moving a place of residence. There was evidently some discussion at this meeting about ordaining Joseph Freeman to the ministry, since at the meeting on July 14 a motion would be made to strike that discussion from the minutes of the January 20 meeting. It rather sounds like this may have been our first church controversy. In the associational minutes for 1861 Freeman is listed as an ordained minister.

Outside Wilson things were moving right along. On February 8 the Confederate government was formed, consisting of seven states that had withdrawn from the Union. On February 28 there was an election in this state to decide the secession question. North Carolina voted to stay in the Union. Wilson County voted for secession, as did most other counties with large slave

^{2.} Wilson County deeds, book 1, p. 675.

^{3.} The minutes were taken by Albert Upchurch, the elected clerk. We will meet him later.

^{4.} Valentine, Episcopalians, 21.

populations.⁵ On April 12 the war began with the assault on Fort Sumter. On April 14 a group of North Carolina volunteers, as a precautionary measure, captured Fort Macon without resistance. Needham Bryan Cobb was among them. On April 15 Lincoln called on the Union states to provide seventy-five thousand troops to put down the rebellion. Immediately the sentiment in North Carolina swung toward secession, and on May 20 the state made the move, becoming the tenth of the eleven states that would constitute the Confederate States of America. The church book mentions nothing about this at all.

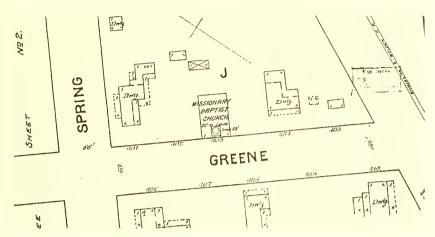
The next meeting recorded is for August 4, 1861, when delegates to the associational meetings were appointed, and in turn these delegates appointed a committee of two to provide nails for the building of the church. John Farmer agreed to undertake the construction.

Time went on and the war ground on. March 1862, the battle between the USS *Monitor* and the CSS *Virginia* (a.k.a. *Merrimac*). April, the battle of Shiloh in Tennessee: twenty-four thousand soldiers killed. Also in April, Fort Macon captured. New Orleans captured. May through August: the peninsular campaign was raging, with heavy fighting around Richmond. In Wilson, our first church building was going up. The first business meeting recorded in almost a year took place on Monday evening, July 14. Nothing much was accomplished, but we did agree to meet again on Sunday night, July 20. For whatever reason, however, we did not. Somehow this seems typical of those early years. Other things were going on at the time, after all. While Wilsonians were consumed with interest in news from the fronts, and while they would be vitally affected by whatever happened there, the war itself pretty much spared Wilson. The big battles were going on in Virginia, and toward the end of it all Sherman marched up the country west of us. The town suffered no physical destruction.

There is no way of knowing when our church building was completed or when the first worship service was held in it. According to the Sanford Fire Insurance Company maps of 1888, it was located on the north side of Green Street about halfway between Spring Street (now Douglas) and the railroad. While there seem to be no photographs, the original building specifications survive. (The drawings here were done by Lyman Laughinghouse, a member

^{5.} Sitterson, *Secession Movement*, 223–229; Kruman, *Parties and Politics*, 180–221; Wooster, *Secession Conventions*, 190–203.

^{6.} At this time "delegate" was the term used for someone attending a convention or associational meeting. "Messenger" referred to an attendant, usually a distinguished person, from another group, without voting privileges. See King, *History of South Carolina Baptists*, 231.

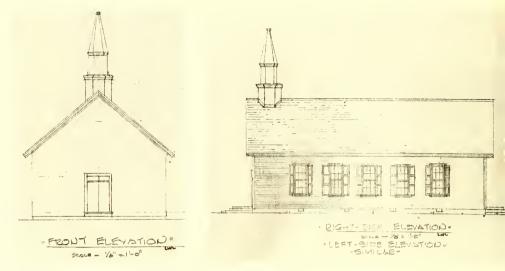


Sanford Fire Insurance Co. Map of 1888 showing location of the church (North Carolina Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill)

of our church today and a retired architect.) The building was rectangular, approximately forty by seventy-five feet, sitting directly on the street. The eaves were twenty feet from the ground, and there was in the middle, at the front of the building, a sixty-foot steeple. There were two aisles four feet wide, and the pews in the side sections extended to the walls. A balcony was supported by four columns. The shingles were of good heart pine twenty-one inches long, with seven inches showing. There was one front door, consisting of two swinging portions. There were twenty-one rows of pews, those on the sides six feet long, those in the center ten feet long. The pews had inclined backs. The rostrum was ten feet wide, projecting forth six feet. Walls were plastered, and three coats of white paint were to be applied inside and out. The pews were to be painted a walnut color, and the window blinds green. Eventually there was a bell. The constitution of 1879 lists ringing the bell as one of the sexton's duties. The bell was manufactured by the McShane Bell Foundry of Baltimore in 1876. It hangs in our own steeple today and is obviously of high quality. It has a nice sound.7

We can draw some inferences from the architecture about the nature of our congregation. We gather that they expected worship to be respectful and dignified. There was one entrance, and there were three sections of seating, divided by two aisles. This meant that men and women could and probably did sit together. Many churches of the time had two front doors and two seating sections. Men and women sat separately, so that the women would not have to tolerate the closeness of undecorous men. Many churches had

^{7.} The company has been in business since 1856. See www.mcshanebell.com.



Modern drawings of church from original specifications (Lyman Laughinghouse)

side aisles, and along the edges of the men's side would be spittoons, because the men chewed tobacco during the services. Spitting where the ladies would have to walk through the spittle, possibly staining their clothes, was not really good form, but it was done. Chewing tobacco in church was really not uncommon.⁸ The fact that the pews had reclining backs are an indication that they were not crudely fashioned from planks, with straight backs, but were crafted by someone somewhere as church furniture. The specifications call for skillful work throughout. This seems to have been a church built by rather prosperous middle-class people. When the Civil War began, most of the men in our church who went into service were officers. This was often determined by social rank, not military experience, and this again establishes the social niche that the new church filled in the community.

While we do not know when the building first opened for worship, the church book indicates that there was a business meeting Tuesday evening,

8. Boyce, *Economic and Social History*, 200; Ownby, *Subduing Satan*, 132–133. In the Cobb family Bible in the Cobb Papers in the Southern Historical Collection at UNC, there is pasted onto the flyleaf a column clipped from a newspaper of 1877, probably from Wadesboro, describing a service in Lilesville where N. B. Cobb preached. The writer says, "The unregenerate heathen still spit on the floor and walls. . . . In the intervals between the stanzas of a beautiful hymn, ending, each with 'Jesus died for me,' 'flap,' 'dab,' 'flop,' 'swizzle-smack' could be heard as tobacco juice and slobber fell in showers." Cobb probably saved the item just because it was so funny, but it provides valuable insight in other ways as to how worship was conducted then.

August 12, 1862, in our "new house of worship." There was a visiting missionary Baptist clergyman present, John K. White, who lived in the Oldfields district of Wilson County, and the folks asked him to chair the meeting. Not much can be known about Elder White, but he and/or his wife must have had a bizarre sense of humor. At the time they had seven children. Two of the girls were Mersaly and Narcisielane, which is just so cute I can hardly stand it. The youngest boy was named, actually named, "Doctor." Three new members were received at this meeting. Dr. Bullock's wife Caroline presented her letter from the Bethel Church of Perquimans County, and William B. and Ann Harrell came with letters from the church at Chapel Hill. The church decided to hold regular business meetings on Saturday night before the first Sunday of a month. Saturday business sessions were normal practice for Baptist churches at the time, though later Wilson Baptist would switch this to Tuesday night. This is when people would present themselves for membership. The practice of an invitation on Sunday morning was not yet widespread. That was part of the influence of the Second Great Awakening (chapter 2), during which the "anxious bench" was associated with the preaching of Charles Finney, the most prominent evangelist of the time. 10 The reception of a new member was a business transaction for a Baptist church, and there was evidently some controversy as to whether it was proper to do this on a Sunday. Thomas P. Lide, our pastor in 1889, took part in a discussion at a Baptist meeting in South Carolina in 1885 on the question: "Is it right to hold church conferences on Sunday?" We don't know what position he took, but when he was our pastor all our conferences, including those where new members were received, took place on Tuesday nights.11

William Bernard Harrell was a physician from Virginia, with an MD from the University of Maryland. The very day he joined the church in Wilson, he was appointed as a deacon and named church clerk. We will hear much more about Dr. and Mrs. Harrell in chapter 6.

At a session on September 20, J. H. Freeman asked for a letter of dismission, and arrangements were made to provide lights for the church. This probably refers to kerosene or "coal oil" lamps, since kerosene first became available around 1860.¹² At an October 30 meeting there was some talk about securing P. D. Gold as pastor, but nothing came of it.¹³ This was the last

^{9.} King, History of South Carolina Baptists, 148–149.

^{10.} Leonard, "Invitation," in his *Dictionary*, 153; Weisberger, *They Gathered at the River*, 146, 239.

^{11.} Unidentified clipping from August 13, 1885, in the collection of the Darlington County [SC] Historical Commission.

^{12.} Furnas, *The Americans*, 429, 649, 671–672.

^{13.} Pleasant Daniel Gold was a missionary Baptist at the time, but later made a



George W. Blount (FBC archives)

business meeting before that of November 8, 1863, over a year later. A lot was happening elsewhere during that time, including the Battle of Gettysburg, in which many soldiers from Wilson were engaged, including some from our congregation, particularly in the Fourth and Sixteenth North Carolina Cavalry and the Fourth and Fifty-fifth North Carolina Infantry regiments.

At a business meeting on Saturday, November 8, George W. Blount and Melissa Cherry offered themselves for membership on profession of faith. A man named Delaney made the motions that the two be received; this man was evidently a member of the church, but the name appears nowhere else. Need-

ham Cobb baptized the two of them that afternoon at Toisnot. Cobb probably preached the next day.

George Washington Blount was home from the war and was mayor of Wilson at the time. He was one of several of our members who were in the Confederate army, and indeed, this meeting of November 8, 1862, is the last entry in the church records until the end of the war. At this point most of the men in the church were either in the war already or soon to go.

Blount had come to Wilson from Nash County and in 1860, at age twenty-two, was setting up a law practice in town. Daisy Gold's history says that he brought his bride, Sally Edgerton, with him, but in the 1860 census taken in July he was boarding alone. Although he opposed secession, he joined the Confederate army. On March 1862 he was appointed first lieutenant of Company A of the Fifty-fifth North Carolina Infantry, was later promoted to captain and assistant quartermaster, but dismissed before November 1 and made mayor of Wilson. A prominent Mason, Mr. Blount would become a successful lawyer and businessman in Wilson and would be a major figure in

name for himself as a prominent Primitive Baptist. He settled in Wilson and became an important figure in the city's history.

14. Gold, *A Town Called Wilson*, 40, 67. Gold gives the same information on the two pages, but in one she dates Blount's arrival as 1858 and in the other as 1860. Valentine, *The Rise of a Southern Town*, 38, has him coming to Wilson in 1861, but he is listed in the 1860 census here.

15. Most of the information on military service for these men comes from Jordan, *North Carolina Troops*.

the development of the Wilson Baptist Church in its early years. Although Blount did his part for the Confederate cause, he was basically Unionist, and happy after the war when he could write to the governor, invite him to a Union meeting in Wilson, and rejoice "in the hour of our return to the glorious flag of our fathers." W. J. Bullock joined in the invitation. Blount died of a heart attack on November 11, 1895, at age fifty-eight. The story in the family is that at his burial someone said in a stage whisper, "There was only one honest lawyer in Wilson and now he's dead." His wife Sally did not pass away until April 1931. Her funeral, conducted by Pastor Bagby, was worthy of a long article in the *News and Observer*. In October 1951 a portrait of G. W. Blount was hung in the Wilson County courtroom. The last surviving child, Sue Edgerton (Mrs. T. F. Pettus), died at eighty-five on August 28, 1962. Mrs. Pettus was a character of long standing, and we will hear more of her later.

George Ballinger was a sergeant in the cavalry, serving in Company H of the Seventh Regiment and in Company F of the Sixteenth Battalion. He was present and accounted for through October 1864.

Our William E. Winstead may be the individual identified as first sergeant in the Fourth North Carolina Infantry, age thirty-four at time of enlistment in 1861. He was wounded in the right leg at Chancellorsville, May 3, 1863; returned to duty; was captured at Winchester, Virginia, September 19, 1864, and later exchanged.

Dr. William Bullock was appointed captain of the Fifty-fifth North Carolina Infantry in March 1862 but resigned on February 24, 1863. Colonel Connally, commanding officer of the Fifty-fifth, recommended accepting his resignation "both because of his incompetency and because he is a malcontent ever striving to *create dissension & discontent*." He left the service on March 28, 1863. We should bear in mind that the military record preserves only one side of Bullock's story. It's entirely possible that he had been behaving quite honorably and had simply run afoul of his commanding officer, who was glad to be rid of a nuisance. Returning to Wilson, Bullock was captain of police while the town was under martial law. He later went to Greenville and Pantego, eventually settling in Belhaven, where he was a founder of First

^{16.} G. W. Blount et al. to Governor Holden, April 29, 1865, in Holden, *Papers*, 1:164–165. Holden's long reply, 165–172, is an eloquent statement of disappointment in the Confederate experiment and hope for "restored brotherhood, a fullness of prosperity, of happiness, and glory which was not realized even in former days!"

^{17.} N&O, April 7, 1931.

^{18.} *N&O*, October 3, 1951. The highly informative address delivered on the occasion by Carroll W. Weathers, dean of the WFU School of Law, is available online at http://feindholloway.com/blount/doc/WeathersAddress.html.

Baptist there. Whatever may have been the problem during his military career, he seems to have been well thought of toward the end of his life.¹⁹

A John Farmer served as a private in Company H of the Fourth North Carolina Cavalry, but it may or many not have been our John Farmer (chapter 3).

W. W. Winstead was a private in Company F of the Sixteenth North Carolina Cavalry. He was captured at Fort Harrison, Virginia, on September 20, 1864, and was confined at Point Lookout, Maryland, until paroled and exchanged February 20, 1865.

Albert E. Upchurch rose to the rank of captain in the Fifty-fifth North Carolina Infantry and was captured at Gettysburg, July 3, 1863. He was taken to Delaware and then transferred to the prison camp at Johnson's Island, Ohio, on July 20, 1863. If you had to be imprisoned during the Civil War, Johnson's Island was not the worst place, perhaps because it was mostly for officers. Memoirs of at least four prisoners survive, and they pretty well agree that treatment was considerate, food adequate, and medical arrangements good. The death rate there was very low for a Civil War prison. The men were free to receive packages of food and clothing from home. The main problem was the cold in winter, which affected the guards as well. That Canadian wind came whipping all the way across Lake Erie and over the unprotected island. The prisoners had their own civilization there, complete with an acting troupe called "The Rebel Thespians" and a band called the "Rebellonians." They put on shows and somehow even managed to have printed programs. One of the prisoners, Joseph M. Kern, left a diary of events there, along with scrapbook and careful drawings of scenes at the camp.20 Our Brother Upchurch may have taken in some shows, but he did not survive the war. He died of dysentery in the sixty-eight-bed camp hospital at 11 P.M. November 9, 1863. Since the time is noted, we may assume he was attended. Several others died that night, something unusual enough to be noted in a prisoner's diary. Another wrote specifically of Upchurch: "Another N.C.'an died today. Capt. Upchurch, 55th N.C. Poor fellow—he leaves wife & children."21 There was an inch of new snow on the ground the night he died. 22 Upchurch is buried there on Johnson's Island, in Lake Erie not far from Sandusky.

In June 1863, the Wilson Board of Commissioners ruled that goats could no longer run loose in the streets, but the burden of compliance was placed on the owners, not the goats.

^{19.} Hugh B. Johnston, Looking Back, nos. 1685, 1686.

^{20.} Joseph M. Kern Papers, SHC 2526, folder 2. See also Douglas, *I Rode with Stonewall*, 260–268; Patterson, *Yankee Rebel*, 123–155; Downer, "Johnson's Island."

^{21.} Robert Bingham Papers, SHC 3731, folder 3, p. 8 of typescript.

^{22.} Patterson, Yankee Rebel, 143.

The young missionary Baptist congregation in Wilson did survive the war, but narrowly. The first stirrings of life become evident on September 3, 1865, months after the end of the war, when Brother Harrell writes in the church book: "During the last two years, owing to the absence of most of the male members in the army, we have had no Conference Meetings of the Church. The War is now over, and Peace once



Grave of A. E. Upchurch (Dave Bush)

more begins her mild reign. May God, in mercy, spare us from another War, and prosper and build up His languishing Zion."

Life was never to return to the old ways after the Civil War. No one owned anyone else anymore. A major bottleneck in the republic's slog to freedom had been cleared. Black people and white people alike had to adjust themselves to new realities, and this would take a very long time. But freedom is better than slavery, and life for all would ultimately be better. Many beloved people were lost during the war, and the livelihoods of many more were wrecked. Recovery did come, and when it did, it brought to daily living refinements and conveniences that were often by-products of the war itself.

After the war clothing was different, not only in appearance but also in how it was made and sold. More and more of the clothes we wore were made outside the home. The demands of war included thousands of uniforms for the soldiers, and this need arose about the same time that the sewing machine came into use. It was also about the time of the potato famine in Ireland, which brought many thousands of immigrants to America, particularly to the northern states. Armies became so large that uniforms could no longer be individually tailored. Standard sizes were developed, and clothing came to be mass produced for the first time, not in homes but in factories with sewing machines. For the young women of New England, especially the immigrant generation, opportunities for employment outside the home developed in the textile mills, which would over the course of decades make their way south, transforming culture here before moving overseas, where the same transformation would begin all over again.²³

^{23.} While the young Irish women were working in the mills producing uniforms, their brothers were wearing them. Over 150,000 Union soldiers were Irish immigrants. The lack of agricultural diversity in Ireland, which led to the starving time of the potato famine and to massive emigration, may have affected the outcome of our Civil War.

Some occupations would cease altogether. Tailors became harder to find, but dry-goods merchants could sell ready-made clothing in their stores—clothing for men, at any rate; off-the-rack clothing for women still lay in the future. With sewing machines in the home, women were sewing better and more quickly, and for a long while were not satisfied with mass-produced clothing made by people they didn't even know. The introduction of standardized paper patterns about this time made the task even easier. The task of spinning in the home disappeared, however. As late as 1860, Celia Darden, who joined Wilson Baptist in October 1867, was making her living out in the Oldfields district by spinning. By 1870 there was really no need for that service, and she was keeping house for a young male relative.

Soldiers had to have shoes, and shoe-making also became a mass industry, with standardized sizes and, for the first time, "crooked shoes," that is, shoes made to fit either the left or the right foot. Before the Civil War, and even during it, shoes had been made to fit either foot.

Men's shirts were now made so that collars were detachable, buttoned to the shirt. The shirts didn't have to be washed as often. Men could simply change their collars, which were sold several to the box. Jeremiah Bell Jeter, an outstanding Baptist preacher in Virginia whose life spanned the nineteenth century, tells a sad but funny story of how he permanently alienated an old deacon by wearing a collar—not a clerical collar, just a stylish detachable one. The old man said it was hypocritical; it made people think he had on a clean shirt when he didn't.²⁴ Urban types wore a tie to hide the brass collar button; men in the country thought it more stylish to let it gleam.

The availability of machine-made cloth had a dramatic effect on women's clothing, too—they wore more of it. As one fashion writer put it, "A well-developed bust, a tapering waist, and huge hips are the combination of points recognized as a good figure." Consequently, there were skirts trimmed and looped with layer after layer of ribbons and lace and braids and fringes, and whole strata of petticoats, supported by cages and broad hoops. As if all this was not uncomfortable enough, fashion called for heavy fabrics. This style of dress did not last long. It was a fire hazard, and women lost their lives when their voluminous clothing brushed against a heater or stove and went up in flames. Enough the strate of fashion. Ladies started wearing hats.

If we were to be transported back to that time to attend a service, we would be struck by how small the people seemed to be. They were considerably shorter than modern Americans. The average height of a Civil War

^{24.} Jeter, Recollections, 195-197.

^{25.} Quoted in Sutherland, Expansion of Everyday Life, 57.

^{26.} A famous example is the poet Longfellow's wife. The mother of T. W. Chambliss, one of our pastors, died of burns, perhaps for that reason.

soldier was a bit more than five foot seven. Look at museum cases of Civil War uniforms, of dresses worn by the ladies at the time, and think how many adults you know today who would fit into them. Not many. A problem that bugs purists among Civil War reenactors is that the reenactors are so much taller than soldiers then would have been. Diet and public health measures have made the difference.

Look at pictures of people from this time and you are struck by the solemn poses. Never a hint of a smile. There were a couple of reasons for this. One was purely technical. In posing for a photograph you had to hold the pose while the shutter was open several seconds. That's hard to do in anything other than a solemn pose. Smiles tend to turn into silly grins. This is why there are seldom any pictures of children; they couldn't stay still long enough. Unless they were dead. When an infant or child died—very common in those days—a photographer, if one were available, might be called in to photograph the child in its coffin. Another reason for those humorless poses reflects the realities of life. Most adults had missing or discolored teeth. Competent dental care would not be available until late in the century. In ancient Israelite times, a young man, praising the beauty of his beloved, was struck by the fact that she had all her teeth (Song of Songs 4:2). Things were not much different in the nineteenth-century United States.

Time was becoming more productive with the introduction and wide use of kerosene lighting shortly after the war. Gas lighting had been available for homes in cities for some time, but kerosene, available in 1860, could give everyone's home a brighter, more consistent light. It meant the end of the colossally important whaling industry in New England, but the future lay with petroleum products, and new fortunes were ready to be made in it.

Soldiers had to eat. No previous war anywhere on earth had involved the necessity of providing food for the military on such a massive scale. No longer could an army on the move simply live off the countryside, though a lot of that was still done during our Civil War by armies on both sides. Southern families would try to hide their goods from rebel soldiers as well as Union soldiers; all of them wanted fresh food. The answer came, at least for the Northern armies, in the form of canned food. Reliable sterilization was a few years in the future, but Northern armies could count on supplies of corned beef in cans, canned sardines, 27 canned tomatoes, and that new food produced by Gilbert Van Camp in massive quantities during the war—pork and beans with tomato sauce in a can.

Particularly important for the army was the introduction of canned condensed milk, which proved convenient and nutritious not only for soldiers

^{27.} The "herring-boxes without topses" worn by Clementine in the song were the oval tins in which sardines came packed.

but also as women found soon after the war, for babies. In those days before pasteurization of marketed milk, the canned product was safer, and actually easier for babies to digest. It made dairy products available in parts of the country where fresh milk was hard or even impossible to come by, such as the Florida Keys, where it became an essential ingredient of a classic southern dish: key lime pie. Grocers in Wilson, as everywhere in the country, would see their line of products greatly expanded as canned goods became more important in the kitchen. It would expand even more as iceboxes came into use in our households. Ice was being commercially manufactured in New Orleans as early as 1865, and gradually businesses producing ice and providing coal became common enough that in cities the "iceman" with his muledrawn wagon became a common sight on the streets. Coal for heating and cooking became more important as forests disappeared, as they did throughout the nineteenth century. East of the Mississippi there is much more forested land today than there was in 1900. Photographs of scenes taken around 1900 often appear bleak to us, for lack of trees.

Sometime in the late 1880s a pharmacist down in Selma invented an aromatic salve and named it Vick's Vaporub, in honor of his brother-in-law, a local doctor. He conceived the idea of advertising it by mail sent out to everyone, addressed only to "occupant." His was the first product to be marketed that way. The U.S. Post Office had some problems with it, but gave in. When our church was founded, no one on the face of the earth had ever heard music that was not live, performed by people right in front of them. By the end of the century, that could no longer be said.

Our church had been in existence now for some five years without ever having had a pastor. Finally some arrangements were made. The brethren persuaded Thomas R. Owen to come down from Tarboro and preach on the first Sunday of each month. They guaranteed to pay at least his expenses and, if possible, something more. Pretty clearly, the financial health of the young congregation was not as sound in the wake of war as it had been earlier, when they somehow managed to put up a building. Elder Owen preached his first sermon in Wilson on October 1, 1865.

The year 1866 brought definite signs of progress. G. W. Blount was made a deacon, joining W. E. Winstead and William B. Harrell. The church decided to hold regular business meetings quarterly, on the Saturday night before the first Sundays in January, April, July, and October, and that communion would be held on those Sundays, "after preaching."

After preaching on April 1, there was a called meeting for the reception of new members. There was no invitation involved; the group simply knew there would be new members to be received and therefore called a business meeting to receive them. Joseph and Mary Freeman returned. They had been

in Halifax. Mattie P. Harper joined also, coming from Hickory Church in Nash County. A letter of dismission was granted to Melissa Cherry.

Now comes a surprise. At this meeting letters of dismission are also granted to "Ruth and Eveline (Colored)." It turns out the church had four colored members, who have never been mentioned before, and even now are known only by their first names: Ruth, Eveline, Martha, and Fereby. (Fereby was a common name at the time, but it was spelled many different ways.) There's no hint of an indication as to when they may have joined, or even whether they joined on profession of faith and were baptized.

June 30 was the Saturday before the first Sunday of July, so we had a meeting. There was prayer, Scripture reading, approval of minutes. Then we voted to expel Martha, "a colored member of this Church," "for grossly unchristian and immoral conduct." A committee was appointed (Freeman, Blount, Harrell) to have a word or two with Brother Ballinger, because he had been "absenting himself from Church" as well as business meetings. In fact, the church decided this should be a standing committee to tackle similar cases in the future. The matter of ordaining Joseph Freeman to the ministry arose again, with a motion from Harrell that a presbytery be formed to examine and possibly ordain Brother Freeman. Brother Owen led in communion the next morning, Sunday, July 1. Presumably communion had been observed at least occasionally before this time, perhaps on April 1 of this year, but this is the first date it is specifically mentioned.

The ordination didn't work out. The meeting seems to have been called for Sunday, August 5, but only one of the elders invited showed up. This was Thomas Hume, Sr., from the Fourth Street Baptist Church in Norfolk. Hume was a remarkable man. After some brief theological education in Richmond he was called at the age of twenty to the pastorate of the Court Street Baptist Church in Portsmouth, a position he held for almost twenty-five years. He had administrative and financial talent, and he became a quite influential figure in the business world as well as the church. He was on the board of the Seaboard & Roanoke Railroad, was president of Portsmouth Insurance Company, and served as trustee of several institutions. In 1855 a deadly epidemic of yellow fever hit the Portsmouth and Norfolk area. Hume was a "fearless, faithful pastor throughout all those sad and weary months," taking special care for orphans. He never came down with the disease himself. (Yellow fever is not spread directly from person to person. A mosquito is the vector that carries the organism from one victim to the next. They didn't know that then.) Hume preached several sermons in Wilson and is said to have done it "with great power."28

^{28.} Cathcart, Baptist Encylopaedia, 1:557-558.

What is going on with Brother Freeman? On August 28 he asks for a letter of dismission again. It is granted. But he must not have taken it anywhere, for on October 21 he is back again, actually requesting to act as the moderator at a business meeting. Apparently he was allowed to do so. Since Freeman had given the church the land it sat on, we may have felt we had to accommodate him to some degree, and he may have felt some claim on us. At this meeting Brother Harrell, the clerk, was asked to start sending letters around to see if the church might obtain the services of a full-time minister, probably "a single man, as being less expensive" than a man with a family. Nothing came of it immediately, and Elder Owen continued to preach once a month.

Success finally came. They found a man who was coming to town at just the right time. A widower. A man of distinction, actually. At a special called meeting on February 24, 1867, the church unanimously called as its first fultime pastor the Rev. Dr. William Hooper, to preach every Sunday. There is no indication as to just when this appointment was made. The note about the February 24 meeting was put in the books on March 10. We only know that Dr. Hooper officiated at communion on Sunday, April 28. He was assisted by "Rev. Jos. H. Freeman." Apparently Brother Freeman had managed to be ordained sometime since the last October, but nothing is in the record about it. Elder Freeman would be a member of a presbytery ordaining William B. Harrell to the ministry in Snow Hill in 1868. Harrell had been the man first recommending Freeman to the ministry.²⁹

The use of the term "Reverend" is worth noting. Among most Baptists of the time this might have sounded a bit high church, too close to Episcopal practice. Traditionally Baptist preachers were called "elders" and addressed formally as "Mister" or "Elder" or informally as "Brother." A historian of the North Carolina Baptist State Convention thinks the first use of the term "Reverend" in the minutes of the state convention was striking enough to point out. This was in 1842, but the title was slow to catch on among more conservative Baptists and is still not accepted by some. Errst Baptist of Wilson has always referred to our pastors as "Mister" except when one has had a doctorate, but this is probably more a matter of custom and grammatical correctness than theological principle.

Dr. Hooper took the formal step of moving his membership from the

^{29.} Harrell Papers, folder 4, p. 334, Atkins Library, UNC-Charlotte.

^{30.} Johnson, History of the North Carolina Baptist State Convention, 37.

^{31.} There are regional variations on this. I grew up in the mid-South, in Memphis. There the preacher was always addressed as "Brother," unless he had a doctorate, but the title was also given to laymen who were especially well regarded by other church members. Black Baptists used the title "Sister" for well-regarded women in the church, but white Baptists did not.

church at Murfreesboro on July 7. In those days the welcoming church did not write another church to get your letter. After all, there were no church offices and secretaries. You came with your letter in hand. This is the way a Baptist church guarded its ramparts to keep it safe from people who were not in good standing with their church back home. The letter had to be examined and accepted before you were given the "right hand of fellowship."

As it turned out, Wilson Baptist Church had chosen a very interesting man indeed as its pastor.

Chapter 5

The Haunted Scholar

Let the day perish wherein I was born.

-- JOB 3:3 KJV

Well have been thought of as an amusing old codger. But in his prime years William Hooper was an intellectually vigorous figure, a renowned scholar and teacher of the classical languages, a respected preacher and theological thinker. He sometimes came to conclusions that put him at odds with associates. On some points he was willing to cede ground, and on others he was not. He was noted for a lively sense of humor, but he suffered from depression, and there was about him a sense of melancholy that likely derived from a horrifying incident in his youth (about which more later).

He was born in Hillsborough on August 31, 1792, during George Washington's first term as president. His father died when William was twelve years old. His mother Helen almost immediately moved to Chapel Hill and enrolled him in the university's preparatory school, where he studied under Joseph Caldwell, the president of the university. He graduated from the university in 1809, at seventeen. That same year his mother married President Caldwell. With a master's degree from UNC behind him in 1812, William went to Princeton for theological study.

In 1814 young Mr. Hooper married Frances Pollock Jones, daughter of North Carolina's solicitor general. They built a house in Chapel Hill, which

1. On the death of Mrs. Hooper's father, William wrote a long remembrance,

is still standing at 504 East Franklin Street.² Radio star Kay Kyser owned it after his retirement. Known today as the Hooper-Kyser house, it is, if not the oldest building in Chapel Hill, at least the second oldest. Hooper Lane in Chapel Hill is named for him.³ Hooper worked as "principal tutor" at UNC for a few years and then, in 1817, with a master's in theology from Princeton, began a teaching career at the university, as professor of ancient languages. His family had always been Episcopalian, so it was not surprising that in 1822 he was ordained to the priesthood. He left UNC to become rector of St. John's parish in Fayetteville.

In September 1823 he and another Episcopal clergyman made a trip to Virginia, visited a cave now known as Grand Caverns where they could play tunes on the stalactites, and then called on Thomas Jefferson at Monticello. Hooper wrote an entertaining description of the visit; he was particularly interested in some paintings of biblical subjects.

Bear with me now, but to understand the next paragraph we need to talk about flintlock weapons. To fire a flintlock pistol or musket, you first "primed" it by pouring a bit of powder into the "pan," then put powder and ball down the barrel. When you pulled the trigger, the hammer, a vise holding the flint, would strike a swiveled steel piece, making sparks, which would then ignite the powder in the pan, now exposed by the swiveling action. The flame would in turn ignite the charge in the barrel, and the gun would fire the round. If the priming did not ignite the powder rammed into the barrel, all you had was a "flash in the pan." And of course, you had to "keep your powder dry."

Jefferson told his visitors about a Dutch painting he had once seen depicting the aborted sacrifice of Isaac in Genesis 22. It's best to let Hooper tell this in his own words: "He, the painter, placed a gun in Abraham's hand, he is taking aim at his son, and an angel is p - - s - - g in the pan.' (This levity on a scripture subject I thought rather indecent before two clergymen, and the use of such a word in a man of dignity.)" I expect Jefferson was having some fun with his reverend visitors, but Hooper probably enjoyed the joke, and is prissier about his language than the King James Version of the Bible is. The three gentlemen spent much of their time talking about Jefferson's plans for the University of Virginia.⁴

Hooper's priesthood did not last long. One day he was baptizing a two-

[&]quot;Biographical Sketch of William Jones, Esq." (see bibliography), in which he solicited the assistance of former (and future) justice of the state supreme court Thomas Ruffin. See Hamilton, *Papers of Thomas Ruffin*, 515–516.

^{2.} Battle, History of the University of North Carolina, 271.

^{3.} Chapel Hill Weekly, September 16, 1932.

^{4.} A copy of the journal is at WFU; original at Monticello.

year-old boy and the kid cussed him out. This shook Father William up, and he began rethinking his position on the sacraments and church governance. He had particular difficulty with the exclusive claims made by the Episcopal Church for valid ordination and administration of the sacraments, and the place of the bishop in the government of the church. He sought advice from the bishop of Virginia, Richard Channing Moore, who replied at some length with patient erudition to Hooper's concerns. In 1824 there was a convention of the Episcopal Church in which John Stark Ravenscroft was installed as first bishop of North Carolina. His sermon to the gathering disturbed Father Hooper mightily. He could not bring himself to believe that churches other than the Episcopal were not just as valid. In a letter to Bishop Ravenscroft of May 20, 1824, he wrote, "I look upon them as branches of Christ's church equally with Episcopalians, evidently doing his work, bearing his image, and owned and blessed by Him." In the letter he offered his resignation. The bishop asked him to reconsider, but in a letter of June 14 he made his decision final. The affair constituted a major challenge to the new bishop's leadership, for Hooper was widely known and respected. In finally accepting the resignation, however, Ravenscroft was careful to point out that Hooper had never made any move toward splitting the church in North Carolina or the parish in Fayetteville.8

Hooper now resumed his career at UNC, as professor of rhetoric and logic, and later, again, of ancient languages. He held these chairs from 1825 to 1837. During this time he joined the Baptists. In 1831 he was baptized into the Mt. Carmel Baptist Church near Chapel Hill. All this while his reputation as a scholar, speaker, and writer was spreading. Many of his sermons and addresses were published, although the only "book" he ever wrote, *Latin Prosody for the Use of Schools*, was not much more than a pamphlet. It was a textbook on scanning Latin poetry, with particular emphasis on Horace. It was published in Boston and went through at least three editions. In 1833 the university granted him an LLD, of which he was quite proud.9

Hooper gave a good bit of thought to what education should be. In 1832 he delivered an address in which he proposed the establishment of special

^{5.} Collier Cobb, "William Hooper," in Ashe, *Biographical History*, 7:247. Collier Cobb knew the Hooper family most of his life and was in a good position to know this kind of thing. Also London, *Episcopal Church in North Carolina*, 556.

^{6.} Henshaw, Memoir, 206-211.

^{7.} The exchange of letters is published in the BR of February 6, 1852.

^{8.} London, Episcopal Church in North Carolina, 127-130.

^{9.} In the 1870 census of Wilson County, Hooper's occupation is given as "LLD," which the census taker has written in a dark, bold hand. Apparently the old man, then seventy-eight, made something of an issue of it.

"seminaries" to prepare teachers for a career in the classroom. 10 He had a particular interest in the education of girls and would spend much of his career teaching young women. In an address on the subject he gave in 1848, he speaks to why women should be educated (they are half the human race), and how (essentially, through the same classical curriculum as taken by boys but with a few feminine touches). He thought of physical education as an essential part. 11 Hooper himself was a gifted teacher. Former student Cornelia Phillips remembered him as "a teacher with the power to inspire his pupils with enthusiasm," describing specifically how thrilling it was to hear him tell the story of Xenophon's Anabasis, when the Greek troops, after hopeless months of marching in the interior of Asia Minor, finally catch sight of the liberating sea. 12 James K. Polk, later President Polk, was one of his early students. 3 Josephus Daniels gives a hint as to why he was such a popular teacher: "Professor Hooper was the gentlest of gentlemen, and no pupil failed in Greek if he could possibly give him a passing mark. His students loved him and imposed upon his goodness. Few ever failed to make the passing grade, and Freshmen found his entrance examinations no bar to admission."14

A new boss can make life hard for people who have been with an institution for a long time. When Hooper's stepfather Joseph Caldwell, president of UNC, died in 1835, he was replaced by Governor David Lowrie Swain, who was thirty-one years old at the time. This was not to Hooper's liking; in fact, he had rather expected the appointment himself. He put the new president down with what became his most quoted statement: "North Carolina has given Governor Swain every office he has ever asked for, and now she is sending him to college to get an education."15 Obviously the longtime faculty member was going to have a problem with the new administration, but fortunately the Baptists were aware of William Hooper's talents. In 1838 he left UNC to teach theology in Winnsboro, South Carolina, at Furman Theological Institute during its first year, putting his scholarship to work for the Baptists. Things must not have worked out there, for the next year he applied for a position at the University of South Carolina. Senator Willie P. Mangum of North Carolina wrote a long, warm letter of recommendation for him. 16 He won the position, professor of Roman literature, and kept it for six years.

- 10. A Lecture on the Imperfections of Our Primary Schools.
- 11. Address on Female Education.
- 12. Chamberlain, Old Days in Chapel Hill, 29-30.
- 13. Sellers, James K. Polk, 1:45.
- 14. Daniels, Tar Heel Editor, 233.
- 15. Quoted in Battle, *History of the University of North Carolina*, 424; Chamberlain, *Old Days in Chapel Hill*, 39; Henderson, *Campus of the First State University*, 148.
 - 16. Papers of Willie Person Mangum, 23–25.

There was a black man in Chapel Hill named George Moses Horton who had known Professor Hooper. Horton wrote poetry, and when Hooper left town Horton wrote a piece in his honor that was published in the *Raleigh Register* and the *North-Carolina Gazette* for October 9, 1837.¹⁷

Hooper had been among the Baptist leaders who had, in 1832, first proposed Wake Forest College. Now Wake Forest called him to be its president. He took the job (along with that of pastor of the Wake Forest Baptist Church) starting in January 1847, on the condition that a concerted effort be made to retire the college's debt. Apparently it wasn't successful. Collier Cobb wrote that "Dr. Hooper soon discovered that he was not the man to get the institution out of trouble." From Wake Forest he went to Littleton, where he opened his own school, the Hooper Family School. This wasn't a school for families; it was run by the Hooper family. William was joined by his son Thomas, who would be a lifelong teacher, and by his son-in-law and cousin John DeBerniere Hooper, who would go on to an illustrious career of his own teaching at UNC. "DeB," as he was known, was married to William's daughter Mary Elizabeth, who was her husband's cousin on her mother's side as well.

His next move was to Raleigh, where he joined the Sedgewick Female Seminary, resuming a long-standing interest in the education of women. Christie Anne Farnham, in *Education of the Southern Belle*, quotes several times from an address he made at that institution as groundbreaking, going so far as actually to discuss *how* women should be educated in a day when many men wondered *why* they should be educated at all. He was there only a year when he accepted a call to the New Bern Baptist Church as their pastor, the first time he was a full-time pastor since his days as rector of St. John's in Fayetteville. There was some dissatisfaction in the congregation over his call. There were those who distrusted him because he had once been an Episcopal clergyman and had actually participated in the ordination of another.

In spite of that, the New Bern church made some progress under Hooper's pastorate. The church rules were changed so as to require not only the female members but also the colored members to attend business meetings of the church. Hooper was respected as one of the state's outstanding scholars. He was known as a great preacher. But he resigned on July 16, 1854, giving his reasons, which unfortunately the congregational history either did not or felt it should not report. There may well have been some dissatisfaction with his holding to the idea of "open communion," rather than the "closed com-

^{17.} Barefoot, *Hark the Sound of Tar Heel Voices*, 53-55. Barefoot quotes the poem on p. 55.

^{18.} Cobb, "William Hooper," in Ashe, Biographical History, 7:248.

^{19.} Farnham, Education of the Southern Belle, 33, 73–74, 133, 177.

munion" that most Baptists in America then favored. This simply meant that he thought the Lord's Supper should be served to any and all Christians, not just to Baptists. This is quite consistent with his objections to the exclusive attitudes in the Episcopal Church.²⁰ It is in keeping with Hooper's liberal attitude on the question that he never tried to press his ideas on others. The strength of his feeling, however, comes out in some family correspondence.²¹ That he was widely known as liberal on the question is evident from the effort of the Baptist Union in New York to get his signature, along with others of like sentiment, for a document that, it was hoped, would help to assuage fears and suspicion of Baptist intolerance.²²

From New Bern he went to Murfreesboro, where he assumed the presidency of the Chowan Female Institute, now Chowan University. One of his students there was Martha Louisa Cobb, who would later marry Needham Bryan Cobb. These were productive years (1854–1862) for Hooper, although they were not to end on a happy note. He was asked back to Wake Forest to deliver a commencement address in 1857. This was entitled "The Sacredness of Human Life and American Indifference to Its Destruction." In it he cautions the young men against carrying revolvers. (As you will see, he had a reason.) He speaks of the bloodshed on the "public highways"—by which he means the railroads and steamboat lines, indifferent to the safety of their passengers. "It is a common saying that 'corporations have no souls': but it is a mistake; and the reason of the mistake has been that people looked for the soul in the wrong place, supposing they must find it in the head or the breast; whereas, the seat of a corporation's soul is in the pocket." He opposes dueling and laments at great length that the legal system so favors the criminal at the expense of the general public. He does not like defense lawyers.²³

From his Chowan years also comes his most famous address, "Fifty Years Hence," delivered as a commencement speech at UNC on June 7, 1859. It

^{20.} Cook, In the Beginning, 43-44.

^{21.} William Hooper to his wife, Raleigh, undated. John DeBerniere Hooper Papers, SHC, folder 26; Joseph Caldwell Hooper to his father William, Woods, Florida, December 15, 1872, and Fayetteville, September 17, 1875. Hooper Papers, folder 16.

^{22.} G. H. Ball to William Hooper, New York, April 5, 1871. Hooper Papers, folder 16. Ball writes: "The noble stand taken by Behrends has most wonderfully helped the cause of liberty." This refers to a sermon preached by Adolphus J. F. Behrends at FBC of Cleveland, in which he advocated open communion. He lost his church over it. This didn't keep him from being a famous preacher of the day. He delivered the prestigious Lyman Beecher Lectures on Preaching at Yale in 1890.

^{23.} Quotation from page 9 of the published address (see bibliography). He devotes pages 17–30 to criminal law, which he seems not to understand. A lawyer wrote a separate "Vindication of the Legal Profession against the Unjust Accusations" of Dr. Hooper. It was published anonymously (Raleigh: Spirit of the Age, 1858).



William Hooper (North Carolina Baptist Collection, Z. Smith Reynolds Library, Wake Forest University)

is a wonderful recollection of his college years (he graduated in 1809), full of his characteristic tongue-in-cheek academic wit, and was a major source for Kemp P. Battle's *History of the University of North Carolina*. President James Buchanan was on hand and said afterward, "I think I have never heard in my life more genuine humor and wit than that presented today by the gentleman who delivered the address, and who was formerly a professor here."²⁴

In the fateful year of 1861 Dr. Hooper ran into some trouble with the students and trustees of Chowan. The Civil War began on April 12, and the girls, full of enthusiasm for the Southern cause, wanted to raise the Confederate flag from the "observatory" atop the main building. Dr. Hooper, a Unionist, would not allow it. The war was on, but North Carolina was still in the Union. It did

not secede until May 20. He said they could put their flag anywhere else on the campus they liked, but not on the observatory. It was not that he was entirely unsympathetic. A story told by one of the Hertford County Volunteers, who went off to war on June 12, tells of the girls from Wesleyan, a rival girls' school in Murfreesboro, going to town to see its men off. The Baptist girls from Chowan also came, but were a little too late to give their sweethearts the kind of good-bye they wanted to give. "Dr. Hooper came puffing and blowing with his young ladies . . . but alas they were so late that they hardly had time to express the Sorrow for our departure." The Volunteers got into their wagons, and the girls waved handkerchiefs with tears rolling down their faces, with the old professor still apologizing for being so late on the scene.²⁵

Word got around that William Hooper was disloyal to the South. He felt it necessary to publish a long self-defense in the *Biblical Recorder* (July 24, 1861). Obviously offended that a Southern septuagenarian need do this, he observes that those who question his loyalty are guilty of the same "despotism over freedom of opinion which all our Southern papers are now denouncing

^{24.} Henderson, *Campus of the First State University*, 169. The address is available online at http://docsouth.unc.edu/true/hooper/hooper.html.

^{25.} Stephenson, Sallie Southall Cotton, 10–11.

as one of the damning sins of the North." He acknowledges that the Christian has a duty to the secular authorities, quoting Paul: "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God" (Romans 13:1–2). He felt torn before the die of secession was cast and the Rubicon crossed (he can't resist those classical references, but the public understood them), yet now that the separation has been made, he feels that "the Christian may, with a safe conscience, swear allegiance to the new Power, and, if need be, take up arms in its defense." He appeals to the precedent of Alexander Stephens, vice president of the Confederate States, who had addressed the Georgia legislature November 14, 1860, urging restraint rather than secession until driven to it by hostile action.²⁶ Besides, he writes, "I am fighting by proxy among the volunteers of Tennessee, in the person of my son." Actually, he would have three sons in the Confederate service before the war was over. He really did think of himself as a genuine Southerner. This is evident well before the war in a letter written to Brown University, inquiring as to how a student (a son of his) from the South might fare among fellow students up there in Rhode Island.²⁷

As we will see, the war caused Dr. Hooper agony of soul. The Chowan histories are discreet on the issue, but it clearly proved impossible for him to work out disagreements with the trustees of the school, and in 1862 he offered his resignation. He knew it was inevitable. As early as July 5, 1861, he wrote his son-in-law DeB that Fanny (his wife Frances) wanted to join their son Joe in Florida. Joe assured him there would be preaching opportunities there to support him, but he was reluctant. He didn't like the prospect of going to Fayetteville either, because it gets so hot there in the summer. He tells DeB they had a letter from son William, who wrote about nothing else but "the villains, cowards, and cutthroats of old Abe." Obviously he was put off by this. It was early in the war, and the Federal forces were still dithering. Hooper seems to think this dashes hope for peace. "Surely, they [the United States are not going to conclude the war without striking a blow to give themselves respectability and to warrant such stupendous demonstrations. If they do, Parturiunt montes will be a bitter joke for them all their lives." This is a quotation from Hooper's favorite Latin poet, Horace, which goes on, "The mountains went into labor and brought forth a mouse."28

Being pro-Union (if he was) did not necessarily mean being anti-slavery.

²⁶. Johnston and Browne, *Life of Alexander H. Stephens*, 564–593.

^{27.} William Hooper to Romeo Elton, Winnsboro, SC, October 14, 1939. Copy in Hooper Papers, NCBC-WFU; original at Brown University.

^{28.} William Hooper to DeB Hooper, John Deberniere Hooper Papers, SHC, folder 15.

William Hooper himself may have owned a person or two; we know that his son-in-law DeB did. Unusually, though, the servants in this educated household seem to have been literate. On one occasion while DeB was a professor at UNC he had to miss a faculty meeting, so he sent his slave Jerry Hooper to the meeting to take notes for him. The papers contain an 1861 letter Jerry wrote to "Dear master" about some financial problems caused by students going off to war without first paying him for his services. William Hooper mentions in his journal some big disturbance in the kitchen resulting from a servant's accusing his wife of committing adultery, which she hotly denied. The interesting thing is that Hooper writes of this episode in Greek, presumably because the people involved could read it in English. We know that he gave a couple of dollars to the American Colonization Society, a group devoted to reestablishing American blacks in Liberia.²⁹ This tells us nothing much, since people supported this organization for all sorts of reasons, from enlightened consciences to pure racism. There may be a clue in the name given the Hoopers' first son, born in 1816: William Wilberforce. The boy was named for an uncle of William's, but he in turn had been named for the wellknown English parliamentarian and Christian who became an activist in the anti-slavery cause. When WW was born his parents must surely have been aware of that.

William Hooper went to Fayetteville and began teaching in the Fayetteville Female Seminary. It would appear that Frances did go on to Florida to stay out the war with Joe. At this point Hooper began keeping a diary, now among his papers at WFU.

He writes on March 22 that his family in Florida is in "danger from the enemy." He managed to get DeB a "passport" from the mayor of Fayetteville for him to travel to Florida. On April 12 he writes that DeB has returned with Fanny (Frances) and that she has a cough. April 25: Fort Macon taken. He describes taking the girls—the students—to the arsenal, where he was "struck by the greatness [size] of the works there going on at such immense expense for the purpose of war." April 26: he says in the diary that he wrote a long letter to his son William "advising him to quit abusing the Yankees and to take an interest in educating his children!" Note at the bottom: "New Orleans taken!" This is in bold letters. At the bottom of the page he draws a sketch of a flag—not identifiable as a particular flag, just a flag.

It's really hard to tell which side of the war he was on, and he may not have known himself. As the diary goes on, he often writes of lonely walks down on the river in the evening. He speaks of Union forces as "the enemy," but nowhere does he wax fervent about "our glorious cause," the kind of thing so frequent in Southern rhetoric of the time. He is worried about Fanny's

862 Fayettiville APRIL. 25. Fagettiville 1858. Saturdar Rose 52. morn. rather cloud Rose at S. morn wet & wina N.E. Read mark 14. greet cloudy, wife sleft well case of the woman anointing the head but coughed much . Read & mark 14:22-52. Greek & Wines of Jesus with spitan and & the rebulk on this particles before the most, f some, as a useless waster The over time of utilitarianism very an-cient. Judas at the head of it. Sc. John 12:4-6. Hard rain about 10 a.m. Quete a rainy day, continued after night Visited Warren Winslow - afflicted Read neny paper & Riob, & Harold with anasarca, or general dropey He said the yankey must bring Wrote a long letter (2 sheets) to this war to a conclusion, defore my son men answer to one long, from bankruptay, spending of his to DB, advising him to 5 millions for day. It macon taken! P.M. went to the arsenal? quit abusing the yanker o to with the girls-struck with take an interest in educating the greatness of the works hy children. Then going on-such immence expense for the purpory of war! to drain a nation of treasure & blood, at night had company.

poper's diary for April 25–26, 1862 (North Carolina Baptist Collection, Z. Smith Reynolds Library, ake Forest University)

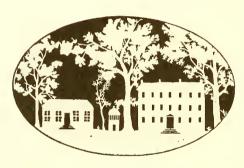
health and seems to write down her every cough and every dose of whiskey or opium or laudanum he gives her. He hears of his cousin Johnson Hooper's death in Richmond. Johnson, a professional humor writer, creator of a comic backwoodsman named Simon Suggs, was secretary to the Confederate Congress and occasionally wrote blistering letters about the perfidy of the "vile northern race." William was disappointed to learn that before Johnson died he converted to Catholicism and received last rites from a priest. He is worried about his own son DuPonceau—"Ponny," they called him—who had enlisted as a surgeon in the army and appeared to be involved in the fighting going on around Richmond. Each day's entry records Frances's deteriorating health.

June 30 he writes an especially sad note: "Wife was seized with a long

^{30.} See, for instance, Johnson Hooper to John DeBerniere Hooper, Montgomery, December 25, 1861. John DeBerniere Papers, SHC, folder 15. A citizen of Alabama, he wrote about Northerners in terms we would hesitate to use of terrorists.

paroxysm of cough—she said death had lost its terror for her, though she could not claim any known comforts of the Holy Spirit. She repeated the hymn, 'Why should the children of the king go mourning all their days.'" For her the pleasures of life and even the comforts of religion were gone. Through all these difficult days Hooper will occasionally throw into the diary some thoughts about the grammar of a verse in the Greek New Testament or the correct pronunciation of Latin. On one occasion he tells of visiting J. B. Solomon in Warrenton.³¹ The last entry is on October 19. There is a note, however, added in pencil, dated December 10: "DuPonceau wounded at Fredericksburg and left thigh amputated."

Ponny was serving as a surgeon with the Eighth Florida Infantry. After that battlefield amputation of his leg (MASH units left a lot to be desired back then), he was sent to a hospital (one originally established for the black population) in Richmond for recovery and was eventually able to get back to Fayetteville, where his parents were then living. He died at home of his



Silhouette by Frances Hooper, earliest known representation of the UNC campus, ca. 1814 (Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill)

wounds on April 4, 1863, less than a month after his mother's suffering had ended on March 10. For some reason Frances Hooper does not figure large in the story. She is chiefly remembered for a careful, skillful silhouette she cut, perhaps in 1814, of a campus scene at UNC. It is the first known representation of the school.

Sometime in 1867 William Hooper and his son-in-law DeB moved to Wilson and bought the Wilson Female Seminary for five thousand dollars.³² They opened

it for business on July 15, operating it as a nonsectarian school. A letter Dr. Hooper wrote to a prospective teacher makes it clear that they would welcome a Presbyterian on the faculty.³³ The school seems to have prospered.

- 31. This was probably at an associational meeting in August. Hooper's presence is independently noted by two of his contemporaries: Jeremiah Bell Jeter, *Reminiscences*, 284; and T. E. Skinner, *Sermons*, 350.
- 32. Valentine, *Rise of a Southern Town*, 42. Hooper's son Thomas may have preceded them. In an undated letter from the early 1870s, son Joseph writes his father: "Wilson seems to be a considerable place. Is it as large as Goldsboro? I never recollect hearing of it until Tom went there." John DeBerniere Hooper Papers, SHC, folder 16.
 - 33. Printed announcement from Wilson Female Seminary, July 1, 1867; William

Wilson Female Şeminary.

The property of the Wilson Bemale Seminary having been purchased by one of the Principals, the public may be assured that the institution is now established on a permanent footing.

It is the purpose of the Principals to devote their best energies to the work of building up a Pohool of high character, which shall advance the cause of education in the Pouth, and aid in the intellectual development of Eastern North Carolina.

The first Lession closed on Friday, the 31st May. The next Pession will commence on the 15th of July.

Early application is desired, in order that ample pravision may be made for the supply of additional instruction in each department.

For Circulars, giving further information, apply to

Messrs. HOOPER,

July 1st, 1867.

Notice of opening of Wilson Female Seminary (Rare Books, Manuscripts, and Special Collections Library, Duke University)

In 1870 there were seventeen girls boarding there, four from Virginia. July 7 was the day when William Hooper presented his letter to the Wilson Baptist Church for membership. He was what we would call today a bivocational pastor, taking care of the church as well as teaching at the school, although his duties at both were surely slight.³⁴ Hooper was still known as a wonderful

Hooper to Maria J. Beattie, November 13, 1867. Hooper Papers, Rare Book, Manuscripts and Special Collections Library, Duke University.

^{34.} Shreve, Development of Education, 35–38.

preacher, although he apparently read his sermons from a manuscript. He must have spent a lot of time with pen in hand, for those sermons seem to have run an hour or more, not unusual at the time. DeB and his family attended St. Timothy's.

Dr. Hooper would come to the post office before it opened in the morning and wait for the postmistress, Josephus Daniels's mother, to open for business and bring him a chair where he could sit, read the newspapers, and chat with the townspeople who came in to call for their mail. Daniels writes, "He had a dignity of bearing and a majestic head that would make him a marked figure in any gathering."35 There are some indications that the old fellow was getting a bit hard to live with. In 1868 DeB's wife wrote her daughter Fanny about a dramatic incident in which the family managed to stop "Pa" from taking some step that would forever alienate him from his children. It's not clear what it was all about. In 1874 she writes her daughter again, expressing some exasperation with Pa, who would sit at the kitchen table discoursing on the difference between the Latin imperfect and perfect tenses while she stood washing the dishes.³⁶ (No household servants now.) Yet in the same letter she tells of a wonderful sermon he preached on the topic of Jesus weeping over Jerusalem. During these years he continued to preach, of course, and do some writing for religious periodicals. While in Wilson he wrote a "Missionary Hymn" published in the Southern Baptist Home and Foreign Journal.³⁷ Allowing for the rhetorical taste of the time, it's okay, if a bit highflown in vocabulary. He set it to the tune SCOTLAND, which does not appear in hymnals today but which does appear in a hymn and tune book he owned. It's a brisk, lively tune and may give us some insight into Hooper's personality. (The poem is in an appendix to this book.) The musically inclined Harrells probably gave him some help here.

The family burden was now certainly on DeB, and when UNC offered him a professorship in Greek in 1875, he accepted, and the whole family moved to Chapel Hill. In October of that year William wrote DeB a remarkable letter, letting out something that had been building within him for sixty years.³⁸ He began by saying that he knew DeB must have heard of an horrifying incident that happened when he was young. He knew that people were aware of it since from time to time someone would unknowingly or maliciously remind

^{35.} Jonathan Daniels, Tar Heel Editor, 60.

^{36.} Mary Elizabeth Hooper to My Dear Daughter, April 29, 1868; March 17, 1874. John DeBerniere Papers, SHC, folder 15.

^{37.} Reprinted in African Repository 48, no. 10 (October 1872): 30.

^{38.} William Hooper to John DeBerniere Hooper, Chapel Hill, October 28, 1875. John DeBerniere Papers, SHC, folder 16.

him of it.³⁹ He did not know what other people were saying, but he wanted before he died to set out a clear narrative in his own words of what happened that day, April 11, 1806. Clearing his throat, so to speak, with a line from Virgil's *Aeneid*—"Quamquam animus meminisse horret luctuque refugit, incipiam" (Although I am horrified to remember and seek refuge in mourning, I will begin)—he tells a ghastly story. A newspaper account from a few days after the event is shorter but pretty well sums it up:

On Friday evening, the 11th inst., at the house of William Norwood, Esqr., in the vicinity of Hillsboro, several children were amusing themselves with an empty pistol, as they supposed, it not being primed, and after snapping it several times, it unfortunately discharged, and Mary Alves, about nine years old, a daughter of Walter Alves, Esq., received the contents in her bosom, which in a moment put an end to her life.⁴⁰

William pulled the trigger. Mary was his cousin. William ends the letter by quoting Job: "Often has this tragical scene tempted me, with Job, to curse the day of my birth.... Let darkness and shadow of death stain it." No doubt. William tells whoever might read the letter that his uncle Walter continued to treat him "with undiminished kindness & regard." He doesn't mention how his aunt may have felt about it, although perhaps she was not living at the time. The uncle and nephew later had some correspondence that seems friendly enough. Walter Alves went west and became a founder of Henderson, Kentucky, where a downtown street is named for him. Walter was not born Alves; his father had the surname of his children legally changed from his own to his wife's maiden name. His own name was Hogg. This was surely a kindly man.

Even at eighty-four, Hooper felt well enough to undertake a trip to Philadelphia to be present for the centennial of the nation's independence in July 1876. His daughter wrote to her daughter: "It is really wonderful how well he seems & his mind is as clear & strong as ever." The old man went, and had a splendid time. He wrote a fascinating, at times hilarious, twelve-page letter to his daughter describing his adventures and misadventures. He had a misunderstanding with a Chinese laundryman. The weather was so hot he felt

^{39.} Elisha Mitchell (of Mt. Mitchell fame, and later a colleague of Hooper's at the university) heard of the incident when he was a young man and new to Chapel Hill. Elisha Mitchell to his mother, Chapel Hill, February 11, 1818; Elisha Mitchell Papers, SHC, folder 1.

^{40.} Raleigh Register, April 21, 1806.

^{41.} Mary Elizabeth Hooper to her daughter, Chapel Hill, June 20, 1876. John DeBerniere Hooper Papers, SHC, folder 16.



Grave of Mary Alves in Hillsborough (Photo by author)

absolutely obliged to take a bath (one had to pay to go to a public bathhouse). It was so hot that sometimes the poor horses pulling the streetcars fell dead, but for seven cents you could ride as far as you liked. He was gratified that he could eat out as cheaply here as in Chapel Hill. Iced tea could be had for five cents! For twenty-five cents he could get all he wanted to eat. He allowed a barber to talk him into trying a new procedure called a "champooey," which he assured him was very pleasant. Hooper agreed, so the man rubbed his head with a perfumed liquid, and when it was over charged him seventy-five cents! He really enjoyed all the iced drinks—tea, water, lemonade—and wished DeB were there to enjoy it all. He wrote these twelve pages with a steady, legible hand.⁴² A local newspaper, probably the *Philadelphia Times*, published a piece of several inches about Dr. Hooper's visit and a speech he gave.⁴³

He returned by way of Raleigh, where he preached on a Sunday before going home to Chapel Hill. He soon fell ill. Dr. Hooper, still a member of Wilson Baptist Church, died at home on August 19, 1876,44 one hundred

^{42.} William Hooper to his daughter, Philadelphia, July 10, 1876. John DeBerniere Hooper Papers, SHC, folder 16.

^{43.} Undated clipping in the Hooper Papers, folder 16.

^{44.} Taylor, "William Hooper," 22. Many laudatory pieces were written upon Hooper's death. Probably the best, by Elder W. H. Jordan, a longtime friend, is quoted on pp. 23–26 of Taylor's article, as well as in a memorial written into the minutes of the Baptist State Convention held in Raleigh, 1876, pp. 26–29.

years and a couple of weeks after his grandfather, another William Hooper, helped sign the United States of America into existence by putting his name to the Declaration of Independence.⁴⁵ He is buried beside his mother and stepfather in the very center of the main quadrangle on the UNC campus, McCorkle Place, right off downtown Franklin Street.

They buried little Mary Alves in the old town cemetery in Hillsborough. After two hundred years her grave is still marked, with a simple headstone. They laid her to rest only a few feet from William Hooper the Signer.⁴⁶

45. Independence was declared on July 2, but only John Hancock signed the draft of the Declaration on July 4, the day it came from the printer. The other signatures, dribbled in over the next two months, after a proper engrossed copy was made, but most of the Signers, including Hooper, affixed their names on August 2.

46. The Signer himself is no longer there. In 1894 some folks thought it would be really nifty if all three of our state's Signers were buried in one place, so they moved Hooper's remains to Guilford Courthouse. A significant battle was fought there, but it had nothing to do with any of the three Signers. The townspeople of Hillsborough resented this, and before the train arrived for the removal, they purloined the large horizontal slate slab that is Hooper's tombstone and put it back where it belonged. The DAR still keeps it decorated. Another of the three Signers was dug up and reburied, but they never found the remains of the third. He is somewhere in the burial ground of Christ Church, Philadelphia, but his grave was unmarked.

Chapter 6

A Love Story

Love is strong as death.

—song of solomon 8:6 kJV

The Harrells were members of our church for only a short while in the 1860s, but their story is so compellingly winsome that it simply must be told somewhere, and this is as good a place as any. Dr. Harrell wrote a booklength account of his life. It was never published, but it is in the Harrell Family Papers at UNC-Charlotte. We know when he ended it, but we don't know when he began it. He wrote it over time; the handwriting ages noticeably. He wrote at least parts of it twice. At the end of the account there is a second collection of papers, with a different pagination, recounting some of the events around his marriage. In telling the story I have drawn from both versions, and all unattributed quotations are directly from his papers. Harrell was good with words, but he was so extravagant with commas that he's hard to read. I have helped him out a bit with this regard. Information about the couple's deaths comes from an obituary published in the *Biblical Recorder*.

W. B. Harrell came into the world in Suffolk, Virginia, on January 13, 1823. When he was only seven his mother died of consumption (tuberculosis). He remembered it well enough later to write of it in lovely, tender prose. The early years need not detain us, although there is a lot of interesting stuff there. He vividly remembered Nat Turner's revolt and described the anxious apprehension in the community among both blacks and whites. He witnessed the hanging of a man named Niles. We can pass over the details, but here are his concluding words: "Never shall I forget that awful sight, and I

never wish to see anything like it again." He told of his first sight of a train, when he saw smoke and thought the city was on fire.

His father moved the small family—now only William and his brother James—to Norfolk in 1838 to go into business. The family were Methodists. In fact, William says they only knew one Baptist, a local tailor, but everyone despised the Baptists as an "ignorant, bigotted, deluded set." The father sent him off to college at Randolph-Macon in 1839. He learned how to have a good time during his stay there, but it wasn't long. He sneaked away from the campus one evening to visit a traveling circus, and there he encountered at the entrance "the gaunt figure, the long, sharp-nosed and lean visaged, never-to-be-forgotten form of the tall, slim-shanked, pale, shrunken-jawed, holiness Professor of Greek, Zeke Blanch!" Professor Blanch reported young Harrell, but "he didn't go to the circus. He was too holy for that." Harrell was expelled and sent home just as fast as the college could get rid of him. He came into Norfolk by boat. His father met him, sadly, at the dock, but never said anything to him about the incident. For a while he studied art with John Crawley, who at the time was a well-known American portrait painter.

William's main interest was in girls. He would write, much later in life, about seeing a pretty girl on the street in August 1840 and following her into a church, where she handed him a hymnbook. It was the first time he had ever been in a Baptist church. It looked different. Later on he was invited to a dance, but his stern Methodist father forbade him to go. He had a stepmother by this time, though, and she interceded for sixteen-year-old William, enabling him to attend the dance. There he met Laura Sclater, who was all of fourteen at the time. They danced, and oh, how William remembered it! "Laura was decidedly the most graceful girl on the floor, under the sound of sweet music, swaying from side to side, this way & that (as the music seemed to direct the gentle motions of her body) . . ." He was so smitten with Laura that he took a pin and India ink and pricked her initials onto his arm: LVS. He took her initials to his grave.

Eventually an ugly old uncle named Wilson, whom William detested, came up from Murfreesboro, North Carolina, to ask his father to come and join him in the West Indian slave trade. The word "slave" is underlined in the manuscript. One interesting thing about William's early years is the attention he gives to some of the slaves he had known, the high regard he had for some and the love he had for one or two. He boasted that his family *never* beat a slave—which is of course witness to the fact that a lot of slaves *were* beaten. He defended the right of Southerners to own human beings, but his underlining of the word seems to indicate his disgust with the business of trading in slaves; William seems to have been embarrassed that his father actually went into it.

While in Murfreesboro he broke a leg one Sunday morning while out play-

ing instead of being in Sunday School, naughty boy. Apparently three doctors attended him, for he tells of a serious squabble that broke out when Dr. Neal charged \$150 for his services, while the others charged nothing. Harrell tells of the consequence in one long, hilarious, breathless sentence:

My brother liked to have had a fight about his saying the charge was outrageous, yes, a fight with Dr. Neal and Dr. Wheeler and Dr. Neal did actually come to blows, Dr. Wheeler seizing his gun and firing at Dr. Neal, putting a load of buck-shot into a doorpost in two inches of Neal's head as he stood cursing Wheeler in his own store, and as the gun fired somebody ran down to Mrs. Wheeler and reported to her that her husband was killed in the store uptown by Dr. Neal, and she (being in two months of her time), dropped everything she was about and ran screaming through the streets and reaching the steps of her husband's store, could go no further but fell helpless, in great agony, in the midst of a crowd of men who had rushed up, seeing her distress.

Both doctors survived, and so did Mrs. Wheeler, and William's father paid the bill.

In 1844 the family dissolved their business with Uncle Wilson and opened a store in nearby Winton. While there, William attended a party at the local Masonic lodge. There he played the flute, as he often did, along with his friends Gus on guitar and Ed on the fiddle. They all drank too much. The next morning they all regretted it, and they made a pledge never to touch liquor again. William seems to have kept his pledge, but he sadly tells how three of his friends from that night later died, one a drunk, the other shot and killed in a saloon, and the other shot and killed on a steamboat and tossed into the Mississippi. He was a teetotaler, but he knew he was godless. He gave some thought to declaring himself a Christian, but he couldn't decide. He asked himself, "Can you give up *dancing* for *religion*?" Oh, he enjoyed music and he enjoyed dancing.

Then came a meeting at the Methodist church. He went along with his friend George Frier, and at the time of what we would call the invitation, he said he would go forward if George would. They tossed the question back and forth, but eventually went forward. This was not like it is now, announcing a decision and being warmly welcomed into the church. You went down to the mourner's bench, and you were prayed over, you were "labored" over, until you finally broke down and confessed Christ as your Lord. It was a shattering experience for William. The brethren labored over him for hours. His description of the soul-quaking experience fills fourteen pages in his autobiography. There finally came a moment when he could shout, "I see!"

There was such a commotion in the church at this victory over the devil that people round about got out of bed, put on their clothes, and came back to the church to join in the jubilation.

He may have given up liquor and he may have found the Lord, but he still liked pretty girls. He went up to Baltimore to medical school, where he played the flute with some impromptu bands of other students, mostly Catholics, but he would still come home occasionally. On one of these visits he attended a Baptist church one day and came upon Annis Carter, whom he seems to have been kind of sweet on, and the Carters invited him home for Sunday dinner. He went, and spent what was no doubt a delightful time in the parlor with Annis, when they noticed a couple of little girls poking their heads up at the window outside, looking in and giggling. One of them was Ann Battle, daughter of the formidable Baptist preacher Amos J. Battle, who had just come to Murfreesboro to take charge of Chowan Baptist Female Institute. William seemed particularly struck with little Ann. Annis Carter, the cousin of William's fiddle-playing friend Ed, happened to be the older sister of Joseph E. Carter, who will show up later in our story.

William received his MD from the University of Maryland in 1849 and came down to Center Hill, North Carolina, to set up practice. He boarded with a couple named Simpson. One day the Simpsons had some guests. "As I entered the room, there stood Mrs. Simpson and two young ladies, strangers to me, but I looked and looked again! Can I believe my own eyes! Do I really see before me my lovely charmer of the Masonic celebration in Hertford! It was even so, and there she stood, in all her blooming beauty and grace with those same azure blue eyes, looking more heavenly than they did on that memorable occasion and now her own charming self was right in my presence, a *real fact*, and not a vision from the skies!"

Mrs. Simpson introduced them. "Miss Caroline Battle," she said, "Dr. Harrell." "Miss Ann Battle, Dr. Harrell." The girls were going to live in the neighborhood until her father could bring the rest of the family down. "What! Thought I! Shall I be with *her* all day, and hear her sweet voice and see her as she moves about the room! Surely the Powers above, have sent her to me. . . . If ever man loved with all his *being*, a beautiful object called *woman*, I dearly loved this young girl." That evening they sat together on the portico and sang to each other. "I felt that all I longed for in this world, was *there*, near my side; and how to win so lovely a creature was the chief desire of my heart and soul."

Eventually the Battle family were settled in the neighborhood. Then one of their Negro children fell ill, and Dr. Harrell was called to attend. This gave him the opportunity to drop in every day to see after the little one. But "I did not fail to avail myself of the opportunity to thus see, and talk with, the *one* dear to my heart."

Well, her sister Caroline caught on to what was going on, and it pleased her no end, but her father Amos also caught on, and it did not please him at all. When summer came, he took the two daughters and moved off a bit to a summer place near Rocky Mount, but before they left, William and Ann pledged their love to each other. He wrote her some love letters during the summer, which she kept. In some he wrote poems to her.

When school opened in the fall, Caroline Battle was to be principal of the literary department of the institute, and Ann principal of the music department. On Christmas night of 1850, a large crowd of friends sat up and feasted the whole night long, playing flute and violin and piano. But the next day, "Oh! What a used up set of folks we were." Mrs. Simpson worked it out so the couple could see each other often, and they promised to marry.

But her father, old Amos, began to suspect something. He had other plans for his daughter. He forbade them to see each other anymore. But they kept on, with sister Carrie (that's Caroline) acting as lookout. They would stroll in the evening, but when they got too near the house Carrie would warn them that Father could see them. One day when they parted, William asked Ann, begged her, to join him that night at a party at the Simpsons. "In the most gentle voice she spoke in reply, assuring me, saying 'I will if I can,' and with a warm pressure of her little soft hand and a pleading look for her to come, we parted." Brother Battle saw it. But somehow he forgot about it, so Ann got away and went to the Simpsons' house that night. But then Amos remembered. He showed up at the door with a stout walking stick in his hand and ordered his daughter to go home. William pleaded with Mr. Battle, professing his love for Ann, but to no avail.

But something had broken. Amos Battle had a friend, an old Baptist preacher named Quinton Trotman, over in Gates County. The day after the party Amos harnessed his horses and went off to visit his friend, to ask for advice on what to do about his daughter and that young doctor. Old Brother Trotman told him: "Brother Battle, you are too old a man to begin now to be foolish at this late day. And my advice to you is, to let the young man visit your daughter and if they wish to marry, let them marry and give them as big a blow out as you are able. That's my advice, Brother."

Soon after Brother Battle returned home a little Negro boy showed up at the Simpsons' house with a note for Dr. Harrell:

Dr. Harrell, Dear Sir,

On reflection, my wife and I have concluded that you may visit our daughter Ann, two evenings in the week until further notice and to this arrangement our consent is freely given.

Very truly, A. J. Battle.

A delighted William gave the boy a note to take back, saying that if it were agreeable, he'd come that night. He did. He knocked at the door, and a servant named Dinah let him in. Dinah knew all about what was happening, and she was on the couple's side.

A smile lit up her dark face, as she opened the door for me to enter. She . . . had already placed a chair beside a nice warm fire . . . and pointing to it, she immediately left the room to go and tell "somebody" I had come. I soon heard a light step near me, and looking up, there stood my own dear, lovely charmer, unattended by anyone—all alone—her form graceful as a young deer, but plump and airy in all its elegant proportions, and her whole, beautiful face and countenance expressive of the intense joy that filled her soul at the happy turn given to our devoted love.

They set the marriage date. It would be March 13, 1851, just five days after Ann turned seventeen. They would get Elder Trotman to come down and marry them and also to baptize William into the Baptist church. Trotman would be coming down for his regular visit to the Bethel Church in Perquimans County on Saturday, March 15, so he could come a bit early and take care of the wedding on Thursday and then conduct the regular Saturday business meeting, when William would present himself for membership.

That's the way it was. The eventful day turned out to be absolutely beautiful. The wedding was in the Battle home, of course—Baptists thought of marriages as family occasions more appropriately conducted in a home than a church. But it was festive, and people turned out for it. William was seventy-nine when he wrote: "It is now, at this writing, over *fifty-one years ago*, since that day, and I am old and grey and feeble, but the remembrances and joyful events of that merry crowd and that wedding occasion are very delightful to me." That Saturday William joined the Baptist church and Elder Trotman dunked him under. He never tells us how he explained to Ann the initials "LVS" on his arm, but something tells me it became a standing joke

between them. Both of them seem to have had a rollicking good sense of humor.

It wasn't long after that that Mr. Battle took the rest of the family down to their place near Rocky Mount and left the household to the young Harrells. The place was theirs, and did they enjoy it! He remembers especially fondly a gathering of friends at their place in





William Harrell and Ann Battle Harrell (H. B. Battle, *The Battle Book*)

Harrellsville (yes, there is such a place) during an associational meeting in May. Annis Carter, "the gayest of the gay," had come, and the friends stayed up late into the night singing. No doubt Ann played the piano and William played the flute. Under the circumstances it might be too much to hope that there was some dancing.

In 1859 William and Ann moved to Chapel Hill, where daughter Rosa was born. War clouds were gathering, however. "The South, in the main, was very confident that if the North should invade the South it would be an easy matter to drive the 'Yankee' hordes back again, and thus preserve and maintain our rights as Southern people, and our slaves too." Amos Battle had moved to Wilson and was running a hotel here. He was worried about what would happen to the family's fortunes if war should begin, and asked the Harrells to move to Wilson. So in 1860 they did. Leon was born in Wilson in 1861. On August 12, 1862, they joined our church. Sometime around in here William was down at the station when a troop train came through, and he heard one of the boys shout out "Hurrah for North Carolina!" He went home and wrote a poem, which Ann set to music. This was "Ho! For Carolina!" and it became immediately popular throughout the state. Schoolchildren sang it every day for many years. We couldn't take it seriously today, the words sound so hokey, but it worked back then. It's typical of William that he devoted one of the six stanzas to the beauty of Carolina girls:

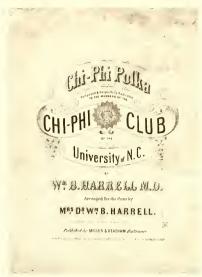
All her girls are charming, graceful, too, and gay, Happy as the bluebirds in the month of May; And they steal your heart, too, by their magic powers, Oh! there are no girls on earth that can compare with ours.

William and Ann would write and publish other music as well—"Up with the Flag!" to stir up Southern hearts, and "Chi-Phi Polka" for a UNC fraternity. No words to that one. There's really not much you can do with a polka except dance to it, so somebody must have been doing some dancing.

William and Ann joined our church on August 12, 1862. (By this time Amos had been won over to the "Campbellite" movement and had become the first pastor of Wilson's First Christian Church.) Their daughter Helen Battle was born in 1863, the year that William went off as a volunteer to the Virginia front as an assistant surgeon in the Confederate army. During his service the Union forces were making a move south, and his medical colleagues went with the Confederate forces on their retreat. For some reason, William decided he would stay behind in Staunton, knowing the "Yankees" would need help. "I thought it best to stay, however, and do all I could for them, though they were our enemies." As wounded soldiers began coming into town, a triage procedure was going on where the more seriously wounded were seen to first. One fellow had received a ball in the leg, and suffered

considerably until Dr. Harrell could get around to his case. When he did, he began by remarking that if the soldier had stayed home he wouldn't have gotten shot in the first place. "The poor fellow stopped his groans for a moment, and looked in my face, as if to see whether I was having a little fun at his expense, and soon I began to cut around the ball to get it out, but he suppressed his groans, and throughout the whole operation bore the cutting & probing like a hero indeed, while a group of other Yankees stood by, encouraging him all the while."

Dr. Harrell extracted the ball from the man's leg and bandaged and dressed the wound. The man then asked him, "Doctor, please let me see that ball." He handed the soldier the ball and, as the man turned it round in his fingers, asked him, "Wouldn't you like to



Sheet music by William and Ann Battle Harrell (North Carolina Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill)

see the fellow that shot that ball into you?" "I would indeed, Doctor." "What would you say to him?" Harrell asked. The soldier answered, "I would like to tell him, Doctor, that I forgive him with all my heart!!" Harrell was startled. He said, "Why, you must be a *Christian*? No man can forgive like *that* who is not a Christian!" "I hope I am, Doctor. I gave my heart to Christ, long before I entered the army." Harrell concludes, "It touched a chord in my own heart that was one of pity for him, because his words were such, as I know, the same Lord Jesus he served I, too, served, and he said we must 'forgive' our 'enemies." While Dr. Harrell was in Virginia, his son Leon and his daughter Helen died back home in Wilson. Grandfather Battle no doubt conducted the funerals, which were probably held in their home at the little hotel.

After the war when the family was together again in Wilson, they tried going about the countryside giving concerts, billing themselves as the Harrell Family. They played the flute and piano, and the children sang duets and solos. They actually made a living at it for a while. They tried expanding into Virginia but found expenses involved in renting pianos, renting a hall, and paying local taxes too high. In 1867 the Harrells opened a school in the old Masonic building near Mr. Battle's hotel. It was successful. Amos Battle still went about preaching a good bit, and one day he came back from Greene County talking about opportunities there might be for William and Ann

down in Snow Hill. They decided to take advantage of it, and while living in Snow Hill the people at the local Baptist church decided they wanted him as their pastor. He was willing to enter the ministry, and a presbytery was hurriedly called. One of them was Joseph H. Freeman from Wilson, the man whom William had wanted our church to ordain.

And so it was that Ann spent the rest of her years as a preacher's wife. They had eleven children, and William served as pastor in Clayton, Selma, Durham, Hillsborough, Graham, Monroe, Winston-Salem, and other places. He retired about 1888 and moved to Dunn, where they spent their last years. W. R. Cullum, their pastor in Dunn, wrote of them:

It would be out of place to say that they retired when they grew old; for they did not grow old. Who ever went into their charming home circle and felt that they were in the presence of old people? . . . The memory of these beautiful Christian lives will be treasured among the richest heritages of this community. One of the most delightful thoughts that this writer has in connection with the Dunn Baptist Church is that of seeing these good people take their places in the house of God on Sunday morning to reflect the very light of heaven from their countenances. ¹

In the last pages of his autobiography William becomes more pensive, more reflective, telling fewer events and meditating more on spiritual matters. The last few pages are dated July 22, 1903. This is the only date in the entire work, and he must have intended that day's entry to be the last. These final four pages are intensely devotional, and they end by quoting a hymn quite familiar to us, but then rather new:

My faith looks up to Thee—
Thou Lamb of Calvary—
Savior Divine.

Now hear me while I pray,
Take all my guilt away,
Oh! let me from this day
Be wholly Thine.

May thy rich grace impart Strength to my fainting heart, My zeal inspire;

^{1.} *BR*, December 19, 1906, 16. The same page happens to contain a long obituary and large photograph of J. B. Solomon, whom we met harnessing his horses in chapter 1.

As thou hast died for me, Oh! may my love to Thee Pure, warm, and changeless be, A living fire!

In the fall of 1906 Ann became ill. After about two months of sickness she quietly passed away on November 22. William died only three days later. He was not sick and had taken no medicine, but he called his children to himself and gave each one his paternal blessing, just as the dying Jacob had blessed his sons. He asked them to place him exactly where Ann was when she died, and to place him in the exact position in which she was lying. They said his last words were "I see the earth receding. I see mother with outstretched hands; I see Jesus in glory. That's all I have to say. It's all right. Amen." And he died. Brother Collum used the same text for both funerals, Zechariah 14:7: "but it shall come to pass, that at evening time it shall be light."

So we leave their story with an unanswered question: did William really give up dancing for religion? I'd like to hope not. Baptist mores being what they were then, he might have felt it wise to forswear dancing in public. But I'd like to think that sometime while William and Ann were living in their home in Dunn, they bought themselves one of those newfangled Victrolas and some platters of dance music and would do some fancy distantly remembered steps, however slowed by old age. I'd like to think they danced their way into heaven, up those stairs like Ginger Rogers and Fred Astaire. She led. He followed, still in love with his charmer.

Chapter 7

A Church Starting Over and a Preacher Starting Out

1868-1871 (William Hooper, Carter Lindsay)

Desolate the streets of Sion; no flocking now to the assembly; the gateways lie deserted.

—LAMENTATIONS 1:3 KNOX

THE WAR LEFT THE CITY of Wilson intact, but it took its toll on the little congregation of Wilson Baptist Church. It is probably safe to say Wilson Baptist almost passed out of existence. At some point, probably in 1864, and for whatever reason, the church received a letter of dismission from the Tar River Association. We know this because at the associational meeting of 1868, the church asked for and received readmission. The church has no records for 1864, the deepest year of the war, and the associational records for that year went missing. In 1862 J. H. Freeman and W. B. Harrell represented Wilson at the Tar River Association, but that is the last mention of our church in the associational records until the "readmission" in 1868, although J. H. Freeman's name appears in those records several times, as pastor of Salem Church in Nash County. Probably the association had simply written us to inform us that since we absented ourselves from the meetings they were taking us off the roll. Churches regularly did that for members who never showed up. By 1868 Wilson Baptist seemed to be collecting its strength again to participate in the wider Baptist life.

In the year 1867, when Dr. Hooper became our pastor, we suffered some

loss of membership when founding members John Farmer and William E. Winstead chose to unite with Brother Freeman's church in Nash County. In January of the next year there was the serious loss of William and Ann Harrell, as he left to pursue his calling as a minister of the gospel at the church in Snow Hill. Things began to look up, however, on Sunday, March 8. That day we received two new members from the White Plains Baptist Church in Georgia. These were Howell Cobb Moss and his wife Margaret, who had three children at the time. The Moss family would be strong stanchions for the church in coming years and, indeed, decades. They are still with us. Howell's great-grandson bears the same name, but we call him Toby.



Howell Cobb Moss (Moss family)

It was at a meeting on Tuesday, September 15, 1868, that the church, "after pleasant and harmonious interchange of sentiment," decided to send Brothers Thomas Clark and D. L. Hardy to the Tar River Association the next month. Hardy was a local merchant dealing in farm equipment and sewing machines. He may have joined the church during the war. This is the first time he is mentioned in the church book. George Blount was now the church clerk, having assumed those duties after Harrell's departure. The mention of a "harmonious interchange of sentiment" seems to hint at a time when sentiment might not have been all that harmonious. Perhaps that would have been in 1864, and it is easy to think that Mr. Freeman was somehow involved in this. The very next Tuesday, an E. J. Eatman appeared to present himself for membership from the Salem Church. He did not have a letter, but he "explained his position in regard to his withdrawal from fellowship" with that church, and his statement was accepted. Yet on Tuesday, October 5, right after the associational meeting at Red Oak in Nash County, J. H. Freeman presided at our own church conference. This does not necessarily mean he was a member. At times a church might ask a guest to preside at a business meeting. Three new members were received, including William and Harriet Battle, a black couple. William, fifty-three, was a blacksmith, Harriet, thirtyfive, a domestic servant. The census records do not identify them as husband

^{1.} His advertisements appeared in the Wilson Ledger, a newspaper of the time.

and wife, but the church book refers to Harriet as Mrs. W. M. Battle. Living with them was a Turner Battle, fourteen, domestic servant; America Taylor, eighty; and a ten-year-old mulatto boy, Henry Epps, also a domestic servant. They appear to have lived near the Hooper house.

At this meeting a call was issued to a W. B. Jones to accept the pastorate of the church. Nothing has been said in the records about Dr. Hooper's leaving, but evidently he had some health problems. Mr. Jones did not accept the call, however.

The call eventually went to W. Carter Lindsay, who would take office on October 2, 1868, until which time "our dearly beloved and venerable Bro. Wm. Hooper resident in our midst continued as often as his feeble health permitted to break the bread of life to our little flock." On that Sunday, October 2, Mr. Lindsay's pastorate began with a celebration of the Lord's Supper, at which he presided along with Dr. Hooper.

Carter Lindsay was with us only a few months, from October 1870 until the next March. He was five foot eight, about average for a man at the time, with light hair, light complexion, and hazel eyes. He was probably a handsome figure, judging from his photos in old age. We were his first pastorate, and though he seems to have been a sweet, likeable man, his stay among us may have been among the low points of his life. He had had a dramatic conversion experience and call to the ministry, yet in this first pastorate he faced debilitating health problems and was greatly discouraged about the task facing him. He was a fascinating man, one well worth knowing.

Unlike William Hooper, whom we caught in his declining years, Lindsay was making his first hesitant steps on a long way up in the world. He was born February 15, 1840, in Louisa County, Virginia, just east of Charlottesville. After four years at the Hampton Academy, he entered the Medical College at Richmond, where he spent four years before entering the Confederate service on May 9, 1861. He served as a private in the Fourth Virginia Cavalry but seems to have spent much of his time sick. On October 21, 1862, he was given a medical discharge for "tubercular disease of both lungs . . . of long standing" and "frequent hemorrhages." It is not clear where Lindsay went from there, although one source mentions his having also studied and practiced law for three years. If this is true, the period 1862–1866 would be the only time he could have done it.4

^{2.} The census records indicated race as "white," "black," "mulatto," "Indian," or "other."

^{3.} Army of the Confederate States Certificate of Disability for Discharge, National Archives.

^{4.} Cathcart, *Baptist Encyclopaedia*, 705. A longer account of his life is found in Hemphill, *Men of Mark in South Carolina*, 1:225–227.

In August 1866 his life took a lurching turn. A prominent Baptist preacher in Manchester, Virginia (now part of Richmond, south of the James), William E. Hatcher, visited Hopeful Church in Louisa County to hold a revival. An old college friend confided to him that he really hoped his brother might find the Lord during the meeting. One evening after the sermon, while the congregation sang, Hatcher walked down the aisle "on the men's side" and spotted a young man whom he took to be the brother.⁵ It was Carter Lindsay. He spoke to him personally, urging him to accept Christ. The man responded, "I well know I ought to," but "No, I am not willing to become a Christian." He took Hatcher's arm and told him there was a good reason for that, but he couldn't confide it. Hatcher replied that he thought he knew the reason: he was not willing to be converted because he had a call to preach the gospel, and if he became a Christian, he would have to do that. "Yes," the young man said with intense emotion, but he was not willing to do it. After the service Hatcher found the fellow slowly riding across the churchyard. He intercepted the horse and issued Lindsay a challenge:

Go home to-night, get your bible, lock yourself up in your room, turn to the Fifty-first Psalm, get upon your knees and talk with God about your future and your duty. If, after you have done this, you find yourself decidedly unwilling to hear the call of God, take your bible and write across its blank page, "Resolved, that I will never, never be a Christian," and then take your Bible and burn it. You will have no further use for it. If, however, you are willing to hear the voice of God and to follow Him, then write on the blank page, "Resolved, that from this hour I give up everything in this world for Christ, and give myself to Christ."

Without a word, Carter Lindsay gently slapped his horse and rode off.

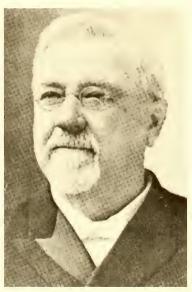
The next day's service was difficult for Brother Hatcher. His disappointment in losing the young man depressed his spirits during the sermon. He had hoped at least that the man might return, but he didn't see him in the gathering. After the sermon he came down from the pulpit and issued an invitation for "anyone willing to give up this world for Jesus Christ" to come forward. At that point the rear door on the men's side opened, and Lindsay Carter walked the aisle with buoyant step, took Hatcher's hand, told him

^{5.} Although not the usual Sunday practice at the time, the issuing of an invitation after the sermon was characteristic of what they called "protracted meetings." Many Baptists, including our William Hooper, were extremely distrustful of the practice, since it led people to make professions under intense emotional pressure, and they did not think of this as true conversion. See Wills, *The First Baptist Church of Columbia*, 82–84.

the matter was settled, then turned to the congregation and declared to the people that from that point on his life belonged to Jesus Christ. It became the talk of the whole community. He was baptized a few days later.

Not many days afterward, at Hatcher's home, the doorbell rang just before daybreak.⁶ He answered the door, and there stood Carter Lindsay. He had come to tell Hatcher that he had answered the call to the ministry and was on his way to Greenville, South Carolina, to enroll in the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.⁷

And so it was that in 1870, the year that the new lighthouse at Cape Hatteras began operating, Carter Lindsay arrived in Wilson to be our pastor, joining Dr. Hooper in conducting communion on October 2. The following Saturday he presided at a business meeting. At this time G. W. Blount and H. C. Moss were elected deacons. William Battle was elected as sexton (janitor), with the church agreeing to pay him three dollars a month for his services. They determined that business sessions would be held each Saturday before the first Sunday in January, April, July, and October and that the Lord's Supper would be observed on the first Sundays of those months. A regular prayer meeting would be held every Tuesday evening. At the first of those prayer meetings, Tuesday, October 11, Blount and Moss were ordained as deacons. This is the first mention in the records of an ordination for deacons. At the October 25 prayer meeting, John B. Brewer presented himself



John B. Brewer (Chowan University)

for membership, bringing a letter from the Maple Springs Church, where he had taught at a local academy. He was coming to Wilson to teach at the Wilson Collegiate Institute and later the Wilson Collegiate Seminary for Young Ladies. He was a bachelor when he joined us, but he married in 1873 while a member. His wife, Anne Elizabeth Joyner of Franklinton, would join the church in May 1878. Three of their children would be born in Wilson.

John Bruce Brewer would make a name for himself as one of North Carolina's outstanding educators. He was born October 26, 1846, and served with the Second Regiment of North Carolina Junior Reserves from May 1864 until the

^{6.} It would have been an actual bell.

^{7.} Hatcher, Along the Trail of the Friendly Years, 78-82.

end of the war. He was at the Battle of Bentonville. After the war he earned a BA and an MA at Wake Forest. He spent the next fifty years with one educational enterprise or another. When he left Wilson in 1881 it was to become president of Chowan Baptist Female Institute, a position he held until 1896, when he went to Virginia to lead Franklin Female Seminary and then Roanoke Institute (now Averett University). He returned to the presidency of Chowan in 1918, but this time he and the dean could not get along, and both of them left in 1920. He was a well-known Democrat, and active as a Baptist beyond his own locality. He was especially involved with what was then called the Baptist Orphanage in Thomasville. He died May 1, 1941, while on a vacation in Blowing Rock with two of his daughters. He is buried in the family plot in Wake Forest.⁸

It was bitterly cold in Wilson on Christmas morning, a Sunday in 1870, when Pastor Lindsay set out for the church. There he found a congregation of eleven people. It was disheartening, to say the least. In a sense it was fortunate for us, because on the next Wednesday he unburdened himself to an old friend, John Stout, in a letter that throws brilliant light not only on Mr. Lindsay but on the situation of our church at the time. It is worth quoting at length:

Pardon me for writing, but I like to obey the spirit's call and just now it asks a letter to friend John.

As the Hard-Shells say "The text which impresses me most just now" is my failure Christmas morning. . . . My theme was "Christ our Refuge": text for it Isa. 32:2 "and a man shall be as a hiding place and a covert from the storm; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." I thought it was beautiful: such grand passages—such splendid flights of imagination—such cogent reasoning—and with all such precious truth! Down [to] the church I went in good humor with myself and with the Lord. The morning was intensely cold. Got up to preach and there sat 9 members and two sinners! How could I preach this elaborate sermon of a full hour's duration to 9 people, 2 of whom were moderately intelligent and the remaining 7 immoderately ignorant? The unfitness of the "position" flashed over me rapidly, and the Lord squashed the whole concern. Served me right.

Did you ever prepare a sermon for 500 and preach it to 8 or 9? Uphill work. The peculiarity of my temperament subjects

^{8.} R. Hargus Taylor, "John Bruce Brewer," in Powell, *Dictionary*, 1:220–221; Smith, *History of Education in North Carolina*, 122.

me much to this inconvenience. I get up some morning in the right spirit and preach a sermon that sets the town ablaze and is the street-gossip for the next week. The next Sunday the house will be crowded, and apt as any other way I "double up and go down"! Everybody is disgusted, myself among the number; so I'll set hard to work and prepare a good sermon for that same crowd next Sunday. But lo! next Sunday nobody is there; and I have to deal out what I consider my "princely fare" to rough backwoodsmen who can appreciate nothing more delicate [than] greens. Well, so we go, like a man on a trotting horse.

You know we have a prosperous little church here of 14 members with a pastor. I feel really anxious sometimes. It looks like it is sick. I often remind myself of an old woman nursing a chicken with the gaps [i.e., "gapes," a disease of poultry], it is so torturing to see it suffer and not to know what to do for it.... I do not anticipate the funeral of my church. On the contrary I think it is in labor: and hope soon to make your ears tingle with the joyful news that there are more heirs of immortality. Seriously, dear Stout, I hope and believe the gracious Master is moving the waters. Will you not pray very earnestly for Him to begin His work here? Stout, I am the poorest excuse for a preacher you know, I hope. Sometimes on the hill top of Faith, and n. [now] in the valley of Despondency. I want to give you some idea of my situation, but you must not for a moment think I'm complaining. It is a hard field. We are 14 in number, poor and unlettered, with the hearty contempt of the elite resting upon us. The church has had no pastor (proper) for 10 years: and when I got here the members hardly knew each other, and did not know a few scattering ones in the town. We are surrounded by fatalists (Hard-shells) [Primitive Baptists] on the one hand, and dyed in the wool Arminians [Free Will Baptists] on the other: from both of the parties I have to draw for a congregation [audience], and how to please both consistently with the truth is a question of no little concern to me. May you, my dear fellow, never stand ix. [between] such upper and nether mill stones. Still I have begun working and praying until I really and genuinely love this people. By the grace of the Lord Jesus to help me I will not leave them in their present lonely state. Some good offers have been made me by large churches with salaries ranging from 4 to 6 hundred dollars more than this church can pay me. But if the Lord has a work here for me to do by His grace the Devil shall not get me away from it in that way. . . .

A wife is happiness the first month, and ecstasy the balance of the time. Do get one or two of them, Stout, they will help you. . . . Stout, I begin to question the propriety of a man's working himself to death at the Seminary. . . . Your constitution, though sound, is weak. Don't test it, Stout. . . . Make a long and steady pull—you have a loaded wagon behind you [in the gospel ministry]. Oh! the ignorance of the people about the Bible! They have no more idea of Repentance, Regeneration, Grace, etc, than they have of Differential Calculus or the Materia Medica. I find that I can take nothing for granted but axioms; nor indulge in any process of reasoning less clear than glass or long than the Syllogism.

This letter was written by a thirty-year-old, inexperienced but smart and well-educated preacher, still idealistic, but terribly discouraged. He's trying so hard. Some interesting points: Notice that his text for December 25 had nothing whatever to do with the birth of Jesus. Baptists were not yet observing Christmas as a religious holiday. (This year, 1870, was the first in which Christmas was observed as a holiday by the federal government, meaning it was a holiday for federal employees and residents of the District of Columbia. Before then it was business as usual. It did not become a public holiday in North Carolina until 1881.) Notice, too, the sense of humor: he urges his friend to get himself a wife or two—they're real handy. It is interesting that he describes the little congregation as "prosperous." Few as they were, they were at least paying his salary.

The church books indicate that a few days later, on January 1, 1871, the Lord's Supper was observed "after a very forcible and opportune sermon on the design and object [of the Supper] by our well beloved Pastor." Young Mr. Lindsay must have felt better after that. Actually there was a steady trickle of new members during these months. Among them was Mary Abell, a young single woman from Virginia who lived at the Hooper academy and taught science there, and Mary Heidelberg, identified in the census records as a "mulatto" living with a white Thomas Lee family in Wilson. We learn from this that Wilson Baptist Church by 1870, at least, was receiving colored

^{9.} W. C. Lindsay to John Stout, December 28, 1870. Lide-Coker-Stout Papers, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina at Columbia. My thanks go to Prof. Gregory A. Wills of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary for calling this letter to my attention.

^{10.} A copy of the *Wilson Ledger* for December 25, 1860, does not even mention Christmas.

^{11.} General Statutes 1881, c. 294, sec. 1.

members, extending "the right hand of fellowship" without recording in the minutes what race they were. In the record books they kept males and females separate, but not the races, at least not after the end of slavery. There could not have been many colored members (there weren't many white members), but without an exhaustive and probably inconclusive search of the census records it would be impossible at this stage to identify the race of each member.

The church received an unexpected shock at the Tuesday prayer meeting on February 28, 1871. Mr. Blount read to the congregation a tender, graceful letter of resignation, effective March 15, from Pastor Lindsay, pleading declining health, probably from the pulmonary problems he had encountered in the army. "The brothers and sisters for several minutes were convulsed with grief," as Mr. Blount went on to read a resolution which he would ask the church to accept and send to the *Biblical Recorder* and *Religious Herald* (the Virginia Baptist state paper). Among other remarks, the resolution spoke of

the manner in which he has discharged his duties during his short stay among us, his ability in the pulpit and his assiduous and very acceptable pastoral labor had so incensed our congregation and so rounded up the life and activity of the Church to inspire us with the most cheering hopes that God had intended him as an instrument of long continued usefulness in this part of his vineyard; that as it has seemed otherwise determined by Divine providence, we avail ourselves of this method of assuring him of our deep sympathy in his affection [affliction?] and our prayer that a change in his mode of life for a time to more active habits, may so renovate his health and strength as to enable him to return to his ministerial labor and be long preserved as an honored instrument in the Service of the Divine Master...

So the regular prayer meeting of Tuesday, March 14, was Lindsay's last day with us. A new member was received, and the church voted to call as pastor Thomas R. Owen, who had been the first preacher for the church back in 1860, when he would come down one Sunday a month. Then there was "a tearful farewell" to Brother Lindsay. He was receiving an annual salary of six hundred dollars when he left. The church had grown from twelve members to twenty.¹³

^{12.} The verb "incense" then meant "fill with enthusiasm."

^{13.} A short unattributed historical piece in the WDT for July 26, 1921, describes Lindsay as "a great, grand man." The only available copy of this is a xerograph of a clipping that was preserved scrapbook-style, as was once library practice. A librar-

Carter Lindsay left Wilson and went to Greenville, South Carolina, where he recuperated a few months before taking the pastorate at Barnwell, which he served with notable success until January 1876. While in Barnwell he received a letter from William Hooper in Wilson, gently chiding him for not writing. We are fortunate to have Lindsay's reply, which reads in part:

Barnwell, S.C. March 7, 1872 My dear Doctor:

O wretched man that I am to have incurred the censure of my oldest friend! I confess all. I should have written. I ought to have written. Would that I had written. Forgive me that I haven't written....

Our church is looking up. Congregations, S Schools, & prayer meetings, all growing. The brethren are spiritually minded, & several unconverted ones serious. . . .

Some change has come over the spirit (but not the "pitch") of my preaching; I hope it is a change that you would approve.

[Here he discusses the content of several books on the Bible and theology that he has been reading.]

I love books. I wish my health would let me live more in them. How I would dance to have you discuss [Jonathan] Edwards on the will as you used to do for me. Verily I am deeply your debtor, not only for ideas, but example also. You remember how I used to "bile" when discussing P. D. Gold's replies (so called) to your articles? Your calm spirit and liberality use[d] to put me to shame. . . . [P. D. Gold edited *Zion's Landmark*, a Primitive Baptist paper in Wilson. Gold probably replied to articles Hooper had written somewhere.]

How are all the dear people in Wilson? I love them much. I would like, love, to preach to them—but our paths diverge. I pray God to send them a faithful shepd. [At this time Wilson

ian has filled in the source and date, but how did the person know? The piece does not appear in the microfilm of the *WDT* for that date, but that day's issue contained an "educational supplement" that was not filmed. Perhaps it came from there. The piece is of great interest because it records the memories, whether direct or indirect, of someone old enough to have remembered the founding years. There is information there found nowhere else, but some information given that can be checked is in error. Since the provenance is so uncertain, I do not feel comfortable relying on it for specifics, which is too bad, since the writer appears to be giving an honest account with no pious overlay. The piece is at the Wilson County Public Library, in the vertical file under "Churches, Baptist." A copy will also be in my own files from this project, in the church archives.

Baptist was without a pastor and Dr. Hooper was doing most of the preaching.] True love to all our brethren, especially to Blount, Moss, Hardy & their families. Tell Blount I owe him a letter but for the present he must be content with the *recognition* of the debt.

Really I am very busy. There is not another preacher in town, & I visit indiscriminately Baptists, Presbyterians. Methodists, Episcopalians, & Catholics. Some of my best friends are among the latter. . . .

Good by. May the Gracious One keep nigh you through life.

Affectionately,

W^m C Lindsay¹⁴

He then spent a year working as a fund-raiser for Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and Furman University, both in Greenville. He was not successful, and when the year came to an end he was without work. But big things were in store for him. John A. Broadus of the seminary was intent on placing Lindsay in the pastorate of First Baptist in Columbia, which was then open. They offered it, he accepted, and he began a long, astoundingly remarkable career there that would end only with his retirement in 1910.

First Baptist in Columbia was moribund when Lindsay became pastor, and he soon realized that progress was going to be slow. There was a lot of deadwood. Some of it could be pruned by removing inactive members from the rolls, but he knew he would just have to wait for some people to die before real improvement could begin. Yet attendance began to rise almost immediately. He was an inventive, vivid, forceful preacher and took his duties of pastoral care earnestly. When his people were in need of spiritual support, he was there for them. In fact, he was occasionally called on for pastoral visits to people from other denominations. He detested church business meetings and tried to cut down on them. He did not even join FBC of Columbia until his fifth year in the pastorate. It was then, as it is now, the practice for pastors to become members of the church they led, but Lindsay must have had his reasons. He never formally became a member of Wilson Baptist Church, nor of the one in Barnwell, South Carolina. He consistently attended meetings of the South Carolina Baptist Convention, missing only a few years, and went to a few meetings of the Southern Baptist Convention occasionally. Travel was difficult back then.

Theologically Lindsay was an outspoken liberal by the standards of the day. He had come to embrace Darwin's idea of the evolution of species (first

^{14.} W. C. Lindsay to William Hooper, John DeBerniere Hooper Papers, folder 16, Southern Historical Collection, UNC–Chapel Hill.

published in 1859) before he ever went to Columbia, and as time went on he became more convinced of it. He once preached a sermon on "Job the Freethinker" in which he boasted that he "seated Darwin and crew among the cherubim!" He defended the Bible as a source of religious truth, but denied that it revealed any scientific insights. He accepted and appreciated the fairly new (to Americans anyway) application of historical criticism to the Bible. "While the Bible contains the word of God it also contains that which is not," and we discern the difference by the aid of Christian consciousness. He thought that the Song of Solomon was no more inspired than the *Baptist Flag*, a second-rate Baptist periodical from Missouri. He thought Esther did have some religious truth, "but not such as justifies its claim to inspiration." Several controversies racked the Southern Baptist Convention toward the end of the century, and Lindsay was active in each. A professor at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, C. H. Toy, was attacked by conservatives for his

view of biblical inspiration. There was a storm over it, and Toy consequently lost his position in 1879 (he went on to Harvard), but Lindsay defended him in speech and in print.16 The Foreign Mission Board had a controversy over the views of biblical inspiration of some candidates for appointment, and once again Lindsay argued their side. He fully expected to lose his job over his liberal theological views, but his people loved him too much to let him go. There were times when he was tempted to leave for practical reasons: he had a large family and the church was often slow in paying his meager salary. The people appreciated his devotion all the



Lindsay Carter (FBC Columbia, SC)

15. Wills, First Baptist Church of Columbia, 155.

16. Another controversy that shook Southern Baptist Theological Seminary was the teaching of church history professor William Whitsitt, who opposed the idea that Baptists had existed in a pure unbroken line of succession since biblical days. Lindsay took his side. Few people today would care to defend that notion, but many Southern Baptists at the time, especially those west of the Appalachians, held it as a sacred Baptist principle. Whitsitt was forced out in 1899. One of his key defenders, and one who was responsible for his taking a position at the University of Richmond, was William E. Hatcher, the preacher who sensed Carter Lindsay's call to the ministry and led him to Christ and career. Another was John E. White, who began his ministry at Wilson Baptist Church.

Lindsay Carter (center) on a North Carolina hunting trip (FBC Columbia, SC)



more for his being willing to stay on even though they knew they were barely paying him enough to live on.

Carter Lindsay never fully recovered his health. His old pulmonary problems persisted, and he seems to have had malaria as well. The church granted him generous periods of time off for recuperation, allowing him to travel in Cuba and Florida (for *malaria?*), and even in Europe. He was an outdoorsman and would often take fishing and hunting trips in the North Carolina mountains, along with a few friends from the church. There is a grand photograph of the old fellow, gun in one hand and wild turkey in the other, accompanied by two other men and three ladies.¹⁷ He wrote his friend John Stout, "I'm naturally a wild man of the woods, feeling very close kinship to the sylvan 'varmints' & thankful to uncle Darwin for bringing to light my lost genealogy."¹⁸ When he left the pastorate in 1910 he did it on his own initiative by retiring, much to the anguish of the flock he had shepherded so ably. Soon after his retirement old Brother Hatcher wrote him from Bluefield, Virginia:¹⁹

My Beloved Friend:

From the far away day when I gave you the glad hand at Hopeful on the morning when you first declared your allegiance to Christ, I have loved you and all that pertained to you has been of concern to me.

^{17.} Wills, First Baptist Church of Columbia, 153.

^{18.} Lindsay to Dear Stout, June 20, 1880. Lide-Stout-Coker Papers, South Caroliniana Library, Columbia.

^{19.} Eldridge B. Hatcher, William E. Hatcher, 635.

I feel a certain pride of seniority about you, a little paternal pride in my relationship to you and ever so much joy in the honorable career you have had.

With the best wishes of a fifty-year friendship I greet you and wish you peace and honor in this world and glory in the other.

Lindsay replied:

Columbia, S.C., February 16th, 1911 My Dear Bro. Hatcher:

Your letter juicy as an orange and sweet as your dear old heart comes like music across water. You have never left my field of vision since that natal day in old Hopeful and will never leave it either on this or the other side of the so-called great Divide . . .

From the top of 71 years (yesterday) I send my heart freighted with a half century of love.

W. C. Lindsay

Hatcher died in 1912. William Carter Lindsay died the next year. He was visiting with R. N. Pratt, a minister in Hendersonville, North Carolina, on Sunday, July 13, no doubt because William Jennings Bryan, President Wilson's secretary of state, was in town for a lecture that day. We don't know whether he got to hear Bryan, only that sometime that day Brother Lindsay suffered a stroke. He was taken back to Columbia on a Friday night and died on Sunday, July 13. He is buried, along with his wife and those of their children who died young, on the grounds of the old FBC sanctuary in Columbia. The church immediately named a Sunday School building Lindsay Hall, and when it was demolished and replaced in 1923, they named the new one Lindsay Hall.

A friend, N. N. Burton, wrote of him:

20. See relevant issues of [Hendersonville] *Western Carolina Democrat* for July 1913. Because of the play and movie *Inherit the Wind*, Bryan is thought of today primarily as the lawyer for the defense in the Scopes trial in Tennessee over the question of evolution. This is a misrepresentation. The Scopes trial was years in the future. Bryan is properly remembered as the father of modern liberal thought and action in the Democratic Party, and it is no doubt in that capacity that he attracted crowds in Hendersonville. He had been the Democratic candidate for president three times. His views on evolution were more sophisticated than popular reputation suggests.

21. See *The State* [Columbia, SC], July 14 (news item), 15 (news item and editorial), 1913.

His character was unique. In him the lion and lamb were happily blended. When occasion demanded he was bold, brave, aggressive, uncompromising, at all other times he was kind, gentle, winsome. He was a divine human magnet which drew others to him. It was impossible to know and not love him. Intensely human in his sympathies he was permeated and dominated by the Spirit of the ever present Christ. He loved his Lord and his fellow men. His one purpose in life was to scatter sunshine. . . . The soul of the man was a fountain of joy.²²

A good man had passed and graced our way.

^{22.} Baptist Courier, August 7, 1913, 12. Most of the information about Lindsay's career after Wilson comes from Gregory A. Wills, *The First Baptist Church of Columbia*, 138–173. I have only hinted at the richness of Wills's discussion. See also William Cox Allen, *A History of the First Baptist Church*, 55–66.

Chapter 8

The Point of No Return

1871-1878 (Thomas R. Owen, George W. Newell, Thomas R. Owen)

Suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.

-ACTS 2:2 KIV

FTER BROTHER LINDSAY LEFT for South Carolina, the church pretty much fell asleep. There was no more regular preaching until May 28, 1871, eleven weeks later. Thomas R. Owen came down twice a month, but he was an absentee pastor, living in Tarboro and preaching at a couple of other churches on the second and third Sundays of each month. The church book quite frankly describes the period: "No matter of interest occurring" until Sunday, October 29. There was a guest preacher that day, and he began a week's worth of daily preaching, the kind of thing we would call a revival but was then known as a "protracted meeting." This guest preacher was Thomas H. Pritchard, at the time pastor of First Baptist Church in Raleigh. Later he would serve as president of Wake Forest College, as pastor of several important churches in Kentucky and North Carolina, and as trustee of several educational institutions. He was instrumental in establishing what is now North Carolina State University.¹

The church clerk wrote that there was considerable interest in this meeting and that it stirred some excitement, but there were only two additions

1. Powell, Dictionary, 5:49-150.

to the church. After the sermon on Thursday a business session was called and an invitation offered. A man named J. G. Dukes presented a letter from Goldsboro, and "Sister Nannie Briggs" came by profession of faith. She was the wife of B. F. Briggs, who at the time was sheriff of Wilson County. He later became a merchant and built the Briggs Hotel.² Captain Briggs (as he was known) would join us as a member in 1878 and later serve as deacon. Nancy Briggs is listed as a milliner in the 1880 census. Brother Owen baptized her "in the usual manner" the next Sunday, November 5. It is not said where this was done, but the "usual place," as noted in the books for April 10 of 1872, was at Toisnot. After Mrs. Briggs's baptism the Lord's Supper was observed; the location, whether back at the church or outdoors, is not specified.

Mr. Owen must not have been around very much. An entry in the books for Sunday, March 5, 1872, indicates that the church has been without pastoral services since January. At the congregation's request, Dr. Hooper preached this Sunday and led us in celebrating the Lord's Supper to "renew our Spiritual strength." At the next Tuesday night business meeting, April 2, Mrs. Rhoda A. Winbourne made a profession of faith. She asked the church to invite Bro. C. Durham to baptize her. (During this time Mr. Owen was not around enough for baptisms just any time, and Dr. Hooper was probably too feeble to be immersing people in Toisnot.) Mrs. Winbourne appears to have been a longtime resident of Nash County, near Bailey. The visiting preacher was Columbus Durham, at the time the young pastor of the Baptist church in Goldsboro. He would later become a significant figure in Southern Baptist life, but what caused Mrs. Winbourne to request the favor of being baptized by him is not clear. Brother Durham came and baptized her on Wednesday, April 10. A week later she was received into the membership, at the same meeting at which fellowship was withdrawn from Brother Dukes. He had confessed to one of the deacons some "gross immoral conduct, the character of which being too shocking to decency and propriety to admit of public investigation." He himself requested the withdrawal of fellowship, presumably because, whatever the offense was, he didn't want it aired in a public meeting of the church. Later, however, the church granted him a letter to move to the church in Wilmington.

In May 1872 we found a new pastor, who assumed his duties in the pulpit on June 9. This was George Washington Newell, born in Fayetteville in 1842. He stood five foot eight, with light hair and gray eyes. He was conscripted (drafted) into the Confederate army on November 19, 1862, and served in the Fifty-third North Carolina Infantry during the Civil War. He was captured at Gettysburg sometime around July 3 to 5, 1863 (records conflict), and confined at Fort Delaware, a prison on Pea Patch Island in the middle of the Delaware River, four miles south of Wilmington, and a most unpleasant place to be.

On November 2, 1864, he wrote a letter to George H. Stuart, a prominent, influential Philadelphia businessman who was chairman of an organization called the Christian Commission, a spin-off from the young YMCA movement. The commission, active from November 1861 through the end of 1865, was dedicated to preserving the federal Union and providing Union soldiers with Bibles, tracts, and other religious literature and to seeing that the forces had adequate spiritual as well as physical care. They also distributed literature among Rebel prisoners. Here is Private Newell's letter:³

Fort Delaware, Delaware, Nov 2 [1864] To Mr. Geo. H. Stuart

Sir I am here a prisoner of war (loyal to the U.S. govt but being unable to secure my release having been in the rebel army as a conscript soldier and the govt. probably considering it impolitic to release such persons at present on their taking the oath of allegiance). My time is passing unimproved and contemplating to devote my self to the Service of God and my fellow men by entering the christian Ministry, I write to desire you if convenient to you to furnish me books for study. Your position as chairman of the christian commission assures me you will supply my wants or if unable to do so conveniently will refer my case to some one who can. I suppose the best works for me are a bible with commentaries and an approved System of theology. With heartfelt wishes for one who devotes himself so much to the care of doing good for his fellow man and in the cause of our redeemer, I am

Your brother in Christ G. W. Newell co. D, 53 N.C. Troops Anderton Squad Citizens Barraks

3. Newell's letter and the reply to it are among Newell's papers at the National Archives. The presence of letters such as this among the records of Confederate soldiers is highly unusual. For information about prison life at Fort Delaware and for help with the interpretation of the situation I owe special thanks to R. Hugh Simmons of the Fort Delaware Society. See also Temple, *The Union Prison at Fort Delaware*, and Dale Fetzer and Bruce Mowday, *Unlikely Allies*. A brief history of the Christian Commission can be found at the University of Minnesota's Web site: http://special.lib.umn.edu/findaid/html/ymca/yusaooo4-3.phtml. A report titled "Work amongst the Rebel Prisoners at Fort Delaware," with a letter to Stuart from Chaplain Paddock, is found in *United States Christian Commission*, Second Annual Report, 141–144.

Stuart was a Radical Republican, one of the group within the party that pressed for abolition before the war, aggressive action against the Confederacy during the war, and full civil rights for freedmen after the war. He was also a passionate advocate of rights for the Indians, promoted the idea of cities providing summer vacations in the country for poor children, and committed himself to the temperance movement. He was a friend of the evangelist Dwight L. Moody. In 1868, his friend President-Elect Grant offered him the position of secretary of the treasury, but he declined it.⁴

In his letter George W. Newell identifies himself as loyal to the U.S. government, which he may well have been. A great many men Unionist in sentiment either were drafted into the Confederate service or even volunteered for it; there wasn't much they could do about it. He wants out of prison, but isn't asking for that directly. He describes himself as ready to take the Oath of Allegiance to the United States. He is quartered in the citizens' barracks, which means he is not in with the great majority of Confederate prisoners. Fort Delaware served not only as a POW camp but also as a prison for civilians. Confederates who were captured but who confessed loyalty to the Union and a willingness to sign the oath were segregated from the rest of the prison population in the citizens' barracks for their own protection. They were contemptuously known by other Confederates as "galvanized Yankees." They were organized into squads with one of their number appointed to be in charge—in Newell's case, William T. Anderton. If these prisoners were actually willing to join the Union army or navy, they could take the oath and be released. Many did. Evidently Newell was not that much of a Unionist.

All outgoing mail at Fort Delaware was censored. Newell undoubtedly knew this and either hoped to circumvent the censors by bribing a guard or wrote in the full knowledge that the letter probably would not get through. It clearly did not, since it is in his papers at the National Archives. The censor passed the letter on to one of the prison chaplains for him to decide what to do with it. It went to the Rev. William Paddock, who sent it back to the censor with this note:

Respectfully returned, with the remark that this is doubtless a worthy object of support. The Medical service would be glad thus to aid, this [Christian Minister], any of the *citizen* prisoners—their number is 200 to 300 & many would like spellers, readers, and arithmetics.

William H. Paddock Chaplain, U.S.A. Fort Delaware

^{4.} See Stuart's autobiography, The Life of George H. Stuart.

The note is sarcastic. Paddock, chaplain of the prison hospital, says that the medical service is quite capable of seeing to Newell's reading needs. Paddock, a duly ordained minister, knew that Newell was not one, and uses the phrase "Christian minister" (abbreviated) with some irony. Newell apparently had a conversion experience and felt a call to the ministry while in prison. A thumbnail sketch of his life in Taylor's *History of the Tar River Association* states that he served as a chaplain during the latter part of the Civil War. This is clearly not true, though he may well have done some amateur pastoral work or even preaching during his stay in the citizens' barracks at Fort Delaware. If later in life people got the idea that he had been a Confederate chaplain, well, he didn't bother to correct them.

The citizens' barracks, Paddock goes on to say, are full of prisoners who are loyal U.S. citizens but who cannot even read, write, or add numbers, and here this Rebel has the nerve to go over the heads of the prison authorities to ask for a learned commentary on the Bible and a systematic theology. In other words, this letter should not be mailed. It wasn't really that these prisoners lacked anything to read. The Christian Commission as well as church groups in the area saw to it that prisoners who wanted reading material could have it. The chaplain himself could have provided the kind of thing Newell was asking for, and, for all we know, may have done so. The literature the Christian Commission distributed was often filled with anti-Confederate propaganda, and the Rebel soldiers did not take kindly to it; on at least one occasion they used the paper for indelicate purposes. Others were more tolerant. Isaac Handy was a Presbyterian minister from Virginia, a civilian, who was imprisoned at Fort Delaware for a little over a year, until his release in October 1864. A dedicated Confederate, he wrote a long account of his experiences there, and in it he remarks on the large bundles of religious literature distributed by the Christian Commission. He complains that "they contain much objectionable matter, and frequently evince a bitter hatred of everything Southern." He got to know Chaplain Paddock very well, however, and had a high regard for his piety, his gentlemanly manner, and "his generous manner towards the prisoners, and his Christian bearing among the sick at the hospitals."8 Handy was kept with officers and would never have met Private Newell.

Newell, however, is willing to communicate with the chairman of the Christian Commission, or at least to let the prison authorities know he is trying to. He may have been trying more to demonstrate to the prison au-

^{5.} North Carolina Baptist State Convention Annual, 1901:81.

^{6.} Taylor, History of the Tar River Association, 294.

^{7.} Temple, The Union Prison at Fort Delaware, 70.

^{8.} Handy, *United States Bonds*, 161–162, 188, 241.

thorities his loyalty to the United States than to get his letter through to Stuart. There may even have been a political angle. The letter was written a week before the national election of 1864, and General Schoepf, commander of the prison, was already under political pressure. Newell may have been attempting to embarrass Schoepf's administration, and hence even President Lincoln, by presenting himself as a loyal Unionist, still languishing in prison, asking nothing more than some reading matter with which to "improve" himself so as to enter the ministry and serve God and fellow man.

Whether as a result of this ploy or not, Newell did get an early release. He was allowed to take the Oath of Allegiance on April 2, 1865, on special orders from the War Department. During that month, 120 prisoners were released on such special orders, most of them from Tennessee and Kentucky, states that were securely under Union control. There is a possibility that his release was due to a clerical error (or perhaps his own misrepresentation), since the documents attesting to his taking the oath give his home as Cumberland County, Tennessee, rather than Cumberland County, North Carolina. (If there is a clerical error here, it could have been made when the records were transcribed around 1900.) No safe conclusion can be drawn other than that Newell got out of prison early, on April 2, the very day Richmond fell. Lee surrendered on April 9. Lincoln was shot on April 14. Johnston surrendered to Sherman at Bennett Place outside Durham on April 26, effectively ending the war. In May, general orders were issued for prisoners who had expressed a desire to take the oath before April 2 to be released, and over a thousand were. In June any prisoner could be released and sent home upon taking the oath.

The practice was for prisoners released to be provided with transportation home by rail or waterway. Whether this was available to Newell with his early release we don't know, although by April 2 the military situation was such that he could probably have made his way safely back to Fayetteville. At any rate, he pursued his desire to enter the ministry. After the war he attended Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Greenville, South Carolina, and graduated in 1871. He seems to have been boarding in Wilmington, doing colporteur work, when he received and accepted our call. He was not yet ordained, so this had to be seen to.

The big day was either Saturday, June 29, or, more likely, Sunday, June 30. The church book says June 29, but it speaks of a morning and evening service that day, making it sound very much like a Sunday, which that year fell on the 30th. Before the morning service a special conference was called in which Brother Newell presented his letter from Wilmington and was admitted as a member. It was arranged for Dr. Hooper and James C. Hiden to form a presbytery for the ordination of Mr. Newell that evening. This was done at an 8 P.M. service "before a large congregation." Hiden was the young min-

ister of the Baptist church in Wilmington. He preached the ordination sermon from 2 Timothy 2:15. Dr. Hooper delivered the charge to the candidate and a prayer. The congregation sang the Doxology, and the newly ordained Rev. George Newell gave the benediction.

Between Mr. Newell's ordination in June 1872 and June 1, 1873, we received seven new members. And something else happened that is not mentioned in the church records: George Newell took unto himself a wife. He was married May 22 to Sarah ("Sallie") Elizabeth Coppedge of Franklin County. As of the first of June church life was put on hold for a few months while contractors made renovations to the church building. No conferences were held, and "very little church services." During this renovation a nice baptistry was installed. It was the duty of the sexton to see that water was provided for the baptistry. The first use of the newly redone building was for the annual meeting of the Tar River Association, which began Wednesday, October 1, and went through Sunday. Among the preachers were Columbus Durham and T. H. Pritchard.

About this time Brother Newell offered his resignation in order to take on a "larger field" in Franklin County. There may have been differences, political differences even, between him and church leaders. This kind of thing often went unmentioned. Maybe his wife just wanted to be near her family. At any rate, Newell bought a farm in Franklin County and lived there the rest of his life. During his career he served a good number of country churches in Franklin, Warren, Nash, and Halifax Counties. He seemed capable of handling larger congregations, but the life of a farmer and country preacher is apparently what he wanted, although he did serve a term in the North Carolina Senate in 1893. He died of a heart attack July 8, 1901, while in his buggy on the way to Louisburg for a meeting that would establish a new academy there. The thumbnail sketch of Mr. Newell in the associational history calls attention to a custom Newell had: never closing a service without offering an invitation. It is such a normal practice today that it comes as a surprise that it would be ever have been thought unusual enough for mention. 10

Once again we were without a pastor, so we turned again to Dr. Hooper, who preached occasionally and led prayer meetings. In January 1874 we made arrangements, once again, with—who else?—Thomas R. Owen to come down from Tarboro and preach the first Sunday each month.

Thomas Robeson Owen keeps popping up in our history, as well as in the stories of other Baptist churches in eastern North Carolina. He is an elusive

^{9.} He was serious enough as a farmer that he once participated in a project with the North Carolina Agricultural Experiment Station to determine the effectiveness of a certain fertilizer for cotton. *Annual Report . . . for 1884*, 92.

^{10.} Taylor, History of the Tar River Association, 294–295.

character, hard to track down but apparently widely known and respected in his time. He was born in 1810, son of a prominent North Carolina politician, and sent to school at the Norwich Military Academy, then in Middleton, Connecticut, which was run by a Captain Alden Partridge. Partridge was better known at that time than he is now. At some point Owen's daughter Martha took special pains to point out her father's connection, and clearly she assumed that the name would be recognized. Partridge had once been superintendent at West Point, but after a falling out there had opened his own academy. He is said to have coined the term "physical education" and was a pioneer long-distance hiker, walking long hard miles just for pleasure. He led his cadets up and over many peaks in New England on hikes that lasted days, and this was before trails were blazed and developed. If Thomas learned from the experience, he must have kept himself in good physical condition. He earned a college degree from UNC and got a theological education (Presbyterian) at Union Theological Seminary in Virginia.11 He was received into the Roanoke Presbytery in 1839, the same year he married Martha Blount McCotter, a fervent Baptist.

Owen served Presbyterian churches in Washington, North Carolina, from 1838 to 1840, by which time he was in Washington, DC, where at least one of the couple's children was born. The year 1842 found him with the Presbyterians in Wilmington, North Carolina, where he seems to have been well liked, and where the people were surprised and disappointed when he suddenly accepted a call to the church in Lexington, North Carolina. The family moved there, but then "for certain prudential reasons he abandoned the whole matter, and soon afterwards left the place." That certainly arouses curiosity. It may have had something to do with his wife's being a Baptist.

By 1842 he and Martha were teaching at the Female Academy in Tarboro. When General Louis Wilson, for whom the city and county of Wilson are named, was buried in Tarboro in 1848, Mr. Owen officiated. In 1852 the Owens opened their own school in town. It became a well-respected institution, and they remained associated with it for many years, even while Mr. Owen was doing his preaching. Among their students was Joseph Blount Cheshire, who later became the Episcopal bishop of North Carolina. He describes both Thomas and Martha as quite superior in talents and in social and intellectual culture, though very different in individual character and temperament. He praises Mr. Owen as a scholar and a man of keen and cultivated intel-

^{11.} Biography of son-in-law George R. Gibbs in *Goodspeed's History of Tennessee*, 896–897, available at http://files.usgwarchives.net/tn/tipton/bios/g-l.txt. Information about Partridge from Bill Bryson, *A Walk in the Woods*, 215.

^{12.} Memorial of the First Presbyterian Church, Wilmington, 12-13.

^{13.} Rumple, History of Presbyterianism in North Carolina, 194.

^{14.} Turner and Bridges, History of Edgecombe County, 368-369.

lect, quite capable," but he seems a bit reluctant to say he was all that great a teacher. He praises Mrs. Owen, however, as a born teacher. 15

Bishop Cheshire tells a funny story about Mr. Owen that needs to be passed on. It does make him sound like a rather delightful man. A "weak and sorry character" in Tarboro named Enos, a Primitive Baptist, was taunted one day by a local skeptic, who asked him if he believed everything in the Bible. "Yes, doctor, I certainly do."

"Well, Enos, doesn't the Bible say that God made all things" and "that He beheld all that He had made, and it was very good? Do you believe that, Enos?" Yes, Enos believed that. "Well, Enos, didn't the Lord make the Devil?" Enos agreed. "Well, Enos, is the Devil very good?" Dr. Lawrence went away laughing at old Enos, who was "sore troubled." He had been painting, and just put his brush in the paint bucket hanging on the ladder and went to get a second opinion, this time from Thomas R. Owen. Enos repeated the questionnaire and finally asked, "Well, Mr. Owen, is the Devil very good?"

"Mr. Owen looked at Enos and took his measure; and then he said, 'Enos, *isn't he a very good Devil?*" "He surely is! He is a good Devil." With that Enos was satisfied and went back to his painting.¹⁶

Local Presbyterians thought that Martha Owen's staunch allegiance to the Baptists made her husband an unsuitable pastor, so most of the preaching he did was in Baptist churches in the area, although he preached at Wilson's Presbyterian church occasionally in 1855. Finally in 1859 he submitted to baptism by immersion and ordination in the Baptist Church at Tarboro and was stricken from the roll of the Orange Presbytery. He served as pastor of the Tarboro congregation from about 1860 to 1871. It was in 1865 that he began his first association with the Wilson Baptist Church, which was briefly resumed in 1871 and now again in 1874. This time he would stay with us, though apparently still at part-time status, until he retired and went to Tipton County, Tennessee, to spend his last years with his daughter and her family, who were Methodists.

Dr. Hooper wrote Carter Lindsay down in South Carolina to tell him of the arrangement with Owen. Lindsay replied in part:

Am delighted to hear of Moss' activity. Give him God-speed & a hearty shake of the hand for me. Indeed, this to all the dear ones

^{15.} Cheshire, "Some Account of My Life for My Children," quoted in Fleming, *Edgecombe County*, 33.

^{16.} Cheshire, Nonnulla, 138-142.

^{17.} Records of First Presbyterian Church, Wilson.

^{18. &}quot;Baptism and Ordination of a Pedobaptist Minister," *BR*, September 22, 1859; Stone, *History of Orange Presbytery*, 370.

in Wilson. Would I could preach for them sometimes. Am not at all satisfied with the preaching I gave them—it was one-sided.

I do not like Br. Owen as a preacher. He puts God in a [strait]-jacket (I will speak reverently). The preacher's task is to oust sin—not track it to its entrance. I speak freely & unguardedly because sure of a correct interpretation from you. Possibly in Owen's case the *demand* regulates not only the quantity but the quality of the supply! Let us have less of theory and more of X^t , the blessed, tender, precious $X^{t,19}$

This sounds like Owen's preaching may have been of a rather scholarly nature, and the remark about demand and quantity suggests that his sermons may not have been as long as people were accustomed to in those days. Owen was not a big believer in revivals. Well, he didn't seem to like them at all. We have noted before some of the hesitation that many Baptists and Presbyterians had about the enthusiastic displays and intense emotional pressure of revivals. The people in Tarboro remember that once when an evangelist came to hold a protracted meeting at the church, Pastor Owen managed to be out of town.20 The church remembers him as "a preacher of great ability, but lack[ing] in the characteristics of an evangelist."21 We may get a taste of his style from a paragraph closing a long piece he wrote soon after becoming a Baptist: "If Anti-Baptists will insist upon a long vovage to the Ophir of Judaism in search of authority for the membership of infants, or to find any precedent for their baptism, they may return with full cargoes of apes and peacocks, but they will bring no gold with them 'in these vessels.'"22 The reference is to 2 Chronicles 9:21.

Thomas R. Owen died in Tipton County, Tennessee, way over on the river, north of Memphis, on July 19, 1882. The Conoconary Baptist Church in Halifax County, North Carolina, which he also served, published a memorial in the *Biblical Recorder*, which said, among other things, "We will remember, tenderly, his devotion to us, the truths of God he taught us, the purity of the life he lived among us, and strive to attain to that high degree of Christian

^{19.} W. C. Lindsay to William Hooper, Barnwell, SC, April 1, 1874; John De-Berniere Hooper Papers, folder 16, SHC, UNC–Chapel Hill. "X" was the common abbreviation for "Christ."

^{20.} Turner and Bridges, History of Edgecombe County, 422-423.

^{21.} A History of the First One Hundred Seventy-five Years of the First Baptist Church, 39. Whoever wrote the unsigned article for the WDT of July 26, 1921, recalls Owen's pastorate as a "great mistake." Although he was "a most Godly man and one of the most accomplished men of his day, he was born a Calvinist . . . and the church remained in a state of inactivity."

^{22.} BR, August 16, 1860.

character which his teaching and his living so vividly manifested."²³ All in all, it sounds like Mr. Owen had some limitations but people liked him, trusted him, and respected him.

A fascinating fact about the Owen family is that Thomas's father James owned a man they knew as "Uncle Moreau." His real name was Omar ibn Said, and he was the son of a king in the area of Senegal or Mali, who was educated and literate in Arabic. He was a hajji—that is, he had made the pilgrimage to Mecca. He was brought to the States as a slave just before the transatlantic slave trade became illegal. Sold to a planter in South Carolina who treated him badly, he escaped, wandered into North Carolina, and was caught and sold at Favetteville to James Owen, who recognized something special about the man. Omar seems not to have been given anything onerous to do; rather, he lived out his life, until his death in 1864, aged around ninety, as much a family friend as a slave, and apparently was a kind of local celebrity. Thomas R. Owen prized a picture he had of "Uncle Moreau." The man became a Presbyterian, as was the Owen family, but there is good evidence he continued to hold to Islam. People would ask him to write the Lord's Prayer for them in Arabic, but it turns out he actually wrote the opening lines of the Koran.²⁴

Wilson Baptist stumbled along during these years, treading water. New members were added from time to time, so we were growing, though pretty slowly. These years were unsettled times for the country, especially for the South.²⁵ While the South was going through the adjustments of Reconstruction, a severe financial depression hit the nation in 1873 and would not end until the 1890s. In the letter from Lindsay to Hooper quoted above he writes of how hard the "panic" (as a financial depression was known then) had hit

^{23.} BR, August 2, 1882. Wilson Baptist Church made no mention of his passing in its records.

^{24.} The Wilson Mirror, October 9, 1889, reprinted by request a long obituary from the North Carolina Presbyterian upon Omar's death in 1864. Later in the paper is another column remembering Mr. Owen's personal recollections, including the note that he prized his photograph of "Uncle Moreau." The photograph is in the DeRosset family papers, collection 214, Image P-214/1, in the Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, UNC–Chapel Hill. An interesting summary of the man's life is written on the back by a man who knew him, named A. K. (?) Waddell in 1905. A recent translation of his short autobiography can be found in The Multilingual Anthology of American Literature, ed. Marc Shell and Werner Sollors (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 58–93, translated by Ala A. Alryyes. See also John F. Foard, North America and Africa [Statesville, NC: Brady the Printer, 1904], 62–67; "Uncle Moreau," North Carolina University Magazine 3, no. 7 (September 1854): 307–309; Thomas C. Parramore, "Omar ibn Said," in Powell, North Carolina Dictionary of Biography.

^{25.} See Valentine, *The Rise of a Southern Town*, esp. chaps. 7 and 9.

South Carolina. A hurricane hit Wilson on September 29, 1874. No mention is made of it in our records, but it happens to have been the first hurricane that the newly created Weather Bureau traced on a weather map. In happier moments Wilson people were surely singing the big hits of the 1870s: "Silver Threads among the Gold," "I'll Take You Home Again, Kathleen," and "Grandfather's Clock."

At a regular Saturday business meeting on April 4, 1874, Miss Jammie Emily Lassiter made a public confession of faith, and the next evening, after the sermon, she was baptized in the new baptistry. She seems to have been the first member of our church to have been baptized within the church building rather than at Toisnot. She may have been black. In the censuses of 1870 and 1880 all the Lassiters or Lasiters in Wilson County were black, but this particular name does not appear in the records, so we can't be sure. For the next couple of years, the minutes record a few members being received, all by letter, and a few members moved away and asked for their letters of dismission. In October 1875, we took leave of Dr. William Hooper, as he left with his daughter's family for Chapel Hill.

The minutes say nothing of it, but on March 28, 1876, our pastor's wife, Mary B. Owen, died "after a lingering illness." It is reasonable to suppose that at least on some occasions she may have accompanied her husband to Wilson, but there is no remembrance of her being here. Neither she nor her husband ever became formal members; evidently they chose to retain membership at Tarboro. ²⁶

Way out west in June, General Custer lost the Battle of the Little Big Horn.

At our Saturday meeting on September 5, 1876, arrangements were made for the upcoming associational meeting at Henderson. Mrs. Farmer and Mrs. Barnes were appointed to help the deacons raise funds for associational purposes. The church had received word of Dr. Hooper's death on August 19. A resolution was then composed and passed:

TRIBUTE OF AFFECTIONATE RESPECT TO OUR WELL BELOVED BROTHER WILLIAM HOOPER, WHO DEPARTED THIS LIFE AT CHAPEL HILL, NORTH CAROLINA, ON THE 19TH DAY OF AUGUST, 1876.

Whereas it hath pleased our Heavenly Father to remove from time to eternity our Bro. William Hooper and whereas he was at the time of his death a member of our Church, much loved and revered, devotedly attached to membership, and an earnest, zealous, active faithful co-worker with us in all that pertained to our Spiritual Welfare while in our midst, therefore, as token of our Love and Esteem and as a tribute to his memory; RESOLVED, That we will cherish in our memories his faithfulness, his devotedness, his humble earnest piety and endeavor to emulate his singleness of purpose in serving God and follow the example of his humble meekness, gentleness and kindness in visiting the poor, distressed, and imprisoned.

That this be spread upon our minutes.

G. W. Blount, Clerk

At a Monday night meeting on September 18 some financial affairs were seen to. Mr. Battle resigned as sexton, and W. H. Farmer agreed to serve, but the duties were extended to raising funds for the lights and fuel. Mr. Blount assumed responsibility for raising funds for the pastor's salary. In these days collections were not taken up in church services. Fund-raising for specific purposes was done outside the church meetings, with certain members being given certain responsibilities. There was no church budget, only a few expenses to be met, notably the upkeep of the building and the pastor's salary.

Some interesting things were going on in the nation in 1877. Rutherford B. Hayes emerged as president after a long, contentious election dispute. Out west, the Indian wars continued to rage. Crazy Horse was killed. Thomas Edison invented the phonograph. In October another hurricane came through the Wilson area. Not much was happening with the Baptists here. We just slumbered on.

This was a matter of concern to some, especially G. W. Blount. He conducted some correspondence with T. H. Pritchard, who had held that meeting for us in 1871 and was now president of Wake Forest College. There was also contact with J. D. Hufham, who was now pastor in Scotland Neck but earlier had been pastor of the Raleigh congregation later known as Tabernacle Baptist Church. Hufham was so influential in Baptist affairs in the state that he was sometimes called "the Baptist Bishop of North Carolina." These gentlemen agreed that things in Wilson might improve if they could get Elder F. M. Jordan to come hold a protracted meeting. From a home base in Orange County Jordan was well known over the state for his successful evangelistic services, and at the time he was engaged by the State Mission Board to "labor in the great desolation that lies east of the [Wilmington & Weldon] R.R." He described himself on the title page of his autobiography as "a baptizer of be-

^{27.} Cathcart, *Baptist Encyclopaedia*, 555; Crow, "Office," 21; R. T. Vann, "James Dunn Hufham," in Ashe, *Biographical History*, 3:225–236; Powell, *Dictionary*, 3:224–225.

^{28.} BR, June 12, 1878.

lievers in almost every river, creek and pool in the state," and it was well nigh true. (In a later statement he added the Atlantic Ocean.) Among the converts who made professions of faith at his meetings were William Poteat, scientist and president of Wake Forest College, and A. T. Robertson, world-renowned New Testament scholar at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Today we would call these meetings "revivals," but the term was not used at the time, and in our case it would not even be appropriate. A "revival" is an occasion when something is brought back to life, but Wilson Baptist had never been particularly lively. Blount was at a loss to know how to raise the issue of such a meeting, because "the church was rather opposed to excitement, and protracted meetings, though just as honest and conscientious as they well could be." This reflects the reservations that many Baptists had toward the emotionalism of camp meetings and other such occasions, the kind of thing discussed in chapter 2 above. Mr. Blount wrote Dr. Pritchard that the possibility of such a meeting depended entirely on how Cobb Moss felt about



Francis Marion Jordan, evangelist (Jordan, *Life and Labors*, image courtesy of North Carolina Baptist Collection, Z. Smith Reynolds Library, Wake Forest University)

it. If Moss supported the idea, it would be all right. Without his approval there would be no point in trying.

Well, Brother Moss must have been willing to give it a try. But only a try. They'd let it go a few days and see what happened. The meeting would start on a Sunday, and then at the regular Tuesday night prayer meeting they'd decide whether to continue it. So on Saturday afternoon, April 20, Brother Brewer went down to the station at two o'clock and met Elder Jordan. Brewer put him up for the night at his Female Seminary, where the visitor enjoyed "a seat at the table with all those pretty girls." Jordan thought that was a pretty good sign. 30

Jordan kept a diary in which he recorded daily events during the meeting, and later in life he wrote an autobiography in which he devotes several pages

^{29.} Jordan, Life and Labors, 176.

^{30.} The description of the meeting and the quotations are from Jordan's autobiography, *Life and Labors*, 175–181, and from his 1878 diary of the events of April 20–May 31, F. M. Jordan Papers, Baptist Historical Collection, Wake Forest University, folder 30. The autobiography does not agree in all details with the diary.

to the Wilson meeting. The meeting began on Sunday, April 21. Neither the church records nor Jordan's autobiography nor his diary mentions it, but that was Easter Sunday. Brother Jordan preached morning and night. At the Tuesday night meeting, Brother Moss, on whose opinion so much depended, "prayed one of the most tender, melting prayers" Mr. Jordan had ever heard, and the meetings would continue. It is interesting that Mr. Owen, theoretically the pastor, is not mentioned in connection with anything having to do with this meeting, before, during, or after. Was he present? Did he approve? We don't know.

When the meeting had gone on about a week, J. D. Hufham himself came down from Scotland Neck to see how things were going, along with his



J. D. Hufham, the "Baptist bishop" (North Carolina Baptist Collection, Z. Smith Reynolds Library, Wake Forest University)

friend R. T. Vann, who was teaching at a girls' school there. Vann was a Baptist luminary in North Carolina until his death in 1941. He lost both arms in a cane mill when he was eleven, but he received a first-class education. In college he was a champion high jumper and long jumper, and he climbed mountains. With a special long mallet strapped to the stub of his left arm, he did just fine at croquet.³¹ He would spend fifteen years as president of Meredith College, and another long term on the Education Board of the Baptist State Convention. Hufham and Vann found that things in Wilson were going splendidly. After two weeks of preaching, there had been several decisions, and several baptisms. By this point Jordan had the congregation in his hands. "Brother Moss was full of the Holy Ghost, and would talk and pray and cry, and I could make any proposition I thought proper without giving offence."

On the morning of Wednesday, May 1, there was an incident in Wilson. A Mr. W. W. Brown suddenly fell dead in a local store. Elder Jordan believed "that God blessed this sudden death to the awakening of sinners," and that night he preached from Hebrews 9:27: "And it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." Mr. Brown does not appear to have been a member of Wilson Baptist, but his funeral was held in our church, with Elder

Hufham giving the funeral sermon, from 1 Corinthians 15:27: "He hath put all things under his feet."

Sunday, May 5, came and the meeting was still going strong. Jordan baptized five people this day, and at the evening service Mrs. Brewer, who was a Methodist, turned to her husband and said, "I want to be baptized." And she didn't want to wait till the next day—she wanted to be baptized right then! With difficulty and patience she was persuaded to wait until the meeting the next evening, presumably just for the sake of convenience. (You would bring a second outfit of clothes to wear when you were baptized.) She was baptized the next night, Monday, May 6, in a "most beautiful and impressive scene."

News of the meeting was getting around. Judge John Kerr came over from Reidsville. Kerr was a distinguished man, sixty-seven years old at the time, president of the Baptist State Convention. He had served in the state legislature and in Congress as well, for two nonsuccessive terms. He became a judge during the Civil War and continued in that capacity afterward. At one time he had been vice president of the Southern Baptist Convention.³² He was well-known as a lay preacher, and he apparently wanted in on the action in Wilson. He "conducted some glorious prayer-meetings and made some heart-searching and soul stirring talks." More people were coming for baptism, including Sheriff B. F. Briggs and John W. Portis, who ran a drugstore at the Briggs Hotel. On Sunday night, May 12, Judge Kerr himself preached from Revelation 22, and three new members were received. There would often be baptisms three or four nights in a week. Elder Jordan comments that "the church had a good baptistry, kept in good condition." On Saturday, May 18, Judge Kerr was still around and preached a powerful sermon. That evening Elder Jordan baptized seven people, including Cobb Moss's daughter Anna and J. M. Brewer's daughter Lydia.

A meeting like this could get a town excited in those days. There wasn't a lot to do, after all, and most people didn't have much leisure time to spend at anything other than daily tasks. If anything happened, it was apt to be at a church. This was a day when crowds would turn out "to hear the spicy speeches on 'Infant Baptism'" and other such topics. An exciting revival preacher from out of town could really get people worked up. If First Baptist Church today were to advertise a spicy speech on infant baptism we could probably accommodate the audience in a broom closet. As late as the 1950s revival meetings at a church could arouse a bit of interest in the wider community, but even then there was much less competition for time and attention than there is today.

^{32.} Cathcart, *Baptist Encyclopaedia*, 652–653; Powell, *Dictionary*, 3:355–356. Judge Kerr would die the next year, 1879.

^{33.} Williams, History of the Baptists in North Carolina, 137.

Monday night the 20th was stormy, but there was a good meeting nonetheless. By May 24, Elder Jordan confessed that he was getting tired and needed some rest, but things kept moving on. Finally Jordan preached his last sermon on Thursday, May 30. There was a lot of emotion as people came to bid him farewell. The next day Elder Jordan visited several families and had dinner with G. W. Blount. The church put up such a clamor that the preacher was persuaded to stay one more night, so he preached another farewell sermon, and two more people came forward. On at least one occasion, Sunday, May 28, Jordan preached at "the colored Baptist church." This church, now known as Jackson Chapel First Baptist Church, was founded in 1872. When our former sexton, Mr. Battle, left us back in September, it was probably to join Jackson Chapel. Meanwhile, the May 22 issue of the Biblical Recorder reported on the annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention, which had taken place in Nashville, Tennessee, the previous week. There were 250 people present, four of them from North Carolina. The May 29 issue reported on the success of the Wilson meeting but reminded readers that very few contributions (two, in fact) had been made for "Bro. Jordan's support while laboring in the Eastern part of the state" and urged them to get on the ball.

According to the church records, Elder Jordan stayed around until June 5, but the May 31 meeting was the last of the series that began on April 21, and according to his diary, he left town on June 1. "Protracted meetings" that went on for two weeks were not unusual, but this meeting was extraordinary. The church clerk, D. L. Hardy, throws further light on the occasion when he says that "there was deep fervent feeling—bearing the imprint of the Holy Spirit—without any undue excitement or noisy demonstration" (emphasis mine). "Undue excitement" was the kind of thing the little congregation had been so wary of, so anxious to avoid. So the proceedings must have been orderly, even though emotional at times. In fact, Hardy points out that most of the actual conversions were made away from the church. A lot of personal visitation and soul-winning must have been done. Elder Jordan began his description of the meeting with the remark that "at this time the Missionary Baptist Church in Wilson was weak, and surrounded with peculiar environments." The last remark seems to be a reference to the prevalence of Primitive Baptists in the area. He obviously got to know the people pretty well before he left, and especially respected the leadership of Brothers Blount and Moss. "Right here I want to say," Jordan writes, "that Bro. Cobb Moss was one of the sweetest spirits I have ever met. He was so full of the Spirit that he would give life and soul to any meeting. Never shall I forget his glowing talks, his tender prayers and flowing tears."

The meeting had lasted six weeks. There were fifty "professions of religion" and forty additions to the church by baptism. In six weeks' time the

church had more than doubled its membership. This had implications for the future fellowship and leadership of the church, as new voices would come to be heard and conflicts would arise. To some extent the misgivings some had about the emotional pressures of such meetings would be justified. Within five years, at least nine of these new members were stricken from the church rolls. But the days of treading water were over. Much later Pastor Jim Jarrard would preach a sermon in which, borrowing a term from science, he described the Pentecost experience in Acts 2 as the "big bang" for the church—the intense, fervent, hot, fiercely energetic, explosive singularity of creation, from which all things proceed. The people of our church experienced the big bang from April 21 to May 31, 1878. That was our Pentecost, our point of no return.

Chapter 9

Walking Orderly

1878–1882 (Thomas R. Owen, Joseph E. Carter)

And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy.

—GALATIANS 6:16 KIV

F MOSES CAME DOWN from his mountaintop experience with any high hopes for his people, he was quickly disillusioned when he found them worshipping a god of their own making. In the New Testament, Pentecost got the young church off to a roaring start, but it doesn't take the book of Acts long to start dealing with church squabbles. And after Wilson Baptist Church had its sudden growth spurt, it wasn't long before problems started arising, particularly with some of the new members. Maybe some of those conversions just didn't quite take, or maybe the longtime members couldn't adjust to the presence and influence of the newcomers in the fellowship. We can sense that trouble is brewing as early as Tuesday, July 9, 1878. At a business meeting—with Brother Owen back on the scene again—the church thinks it advisable to appoint a committee of "reference," consisting of eight men, four of whom joined during the big meeting, to "have the oversight of the Spiritual interest of the Church, especially to examine into misdemeanor, disorder, or difficulty existing between members; and to prevent as far as possible the bringing of any case before the Church which may be lawfully adjusted by them." Clearly some members are worried about the conduct of some others. This committee is charged to have private visits with anyone acting suspiciously un-Christian, trying to resolve matters without having to

air charges against members in a church business meeting. Nothing is said about the conduct of anyone in particular, but they pretty surely anticipate trouble.

At the next couple of meetings the Reference Committee was glad to report they had nothing to report. There seems to have been some feeling that the articles of faith and constitution needed to be revised, and James Murray was put in charge of this. Murray was a schoolteacher who later became county superintendent. The church collected a couple of dollars to pay the sexton for extra work during the long protracted meeting. Some routine matters were seen to. But at the meeting on Saturday, October 5, the Reference Committee was sad to report that four of the new members, Brothers Williams, Hobgood, Humphrey, and Brooks, had not been "walking in the paths of duty" and that the church should take action. They dealt with William R. Williams peremptorily: they just voted him out, period. Unanimously. No reason given. We would assume from the census record that he was a ten-year-old boy. The clerk was asked to notify the others that they should present themselves at the next business meeting "to answer to the charge preferred against them," which would be presented in writing. It was not much different from a court proceeding, with which Mr. Blount would certainly be familiar. In another matter, Mr. Murray wasn't quite clear what was expected of him with this business about articles of faith and constitution. The church agreed to his request to let Mr. Moss help him.

On October 22–23 Wilson felt the winds of another hurricane. The Weather Bureau was numbering them by this time. This was number 11 for the season. Saturday, November 2, we had a stormy church business meeting. The Church Covenant, as revised, came up for discussion, and there was a lot of it, although the records don't indicate what the problem was. An amendment was made, but then the whole thing was killed. Some members thought we were acting too hastily. The new Articles of Faith, however, were approved. It was a short document of eight sentences or articles, affirming the triune God, the sin of humanity, the redemptive work of Jesus, believer's baptism by immersion, and closed communion, and recognizing only elders and deacons as church officers. Nothing at all was said about the Bible.

But then we took up charges against our erring brethren. Mr. Blount reported that he had had a good talk with Brother Brooks, who confessed his sinful acts, whatever they were, hoped that the church would forgive him, and promised not to let himself be led astray again. That satisfied us, and we restored him to fellowship. Brother Hobgood was present. He explained that his business was such that he just simply couldn't attend all the regular

^{1.} A long obituary for Murray appears in *Minutes of the Fifty-Ninth Annual Meeting of the Baptist State Convention*, 1889, 39.

meetings, since he was soliciting business for his paper, the *Wilson Advance*. He promised to be present whenever possible, and we took his word for it. Hobgood's offense was simply that he was often absent. That was taken seriously; indeed, the first order of business at this night's meeting was the taking of the roll. Now Brother Humphrey, he was accused of "intemperance." This referred not to simply indulging in drink, but to getting drunk. He too was present, "pled guilty," manifested sorrow, and promised not to let the Evil One lead him astray again. We restored him to our full fellowship, whereupon Cobb Moss led in prayer for the spiritual strengthening of these weaker brethren.

The prayer must not have worked. At the meeting on Saturday, November 30, the Reference Committee sadly reported Brothers Brooks and Humphrey again. Humphrey had once again been intemperant, and Brooks had even been dancing. (That was probably the charge brought against him the first time.) Once again, they were summoned to appear and answer for themselves. The business of the Church Covenant was brought up and discussed again, but once again was killed. The next two business meetings, the last of 1878, dealt with the dancer and the drinker. Humphrey, guilty again of intemperance, was a difficult case. The church didn't quite know what to do about it, but still wanted to work things out with him personally. Brooks, who danced, was simply removed from the roll.

That's what was going on here in 1878. Over in Memphis, the largest and most cosmopolitan city in the South, a yellow fever epidemic had struck. When the year ended, about 75 percent of the population was dead of the plague, and many of the rest had fled, never to return. The depleted city lost its charter, and the future of Atlanta as prime city of the South was secured.

The new year of 1879 began with a business meeting on February 1 that was so harmonious that those present could not even bring themselves to sing the parting hymn. "God be praised for such meetings," wrote Brother Hardy, the clerk. But the very next month we had to deal with Brother Humphrey again. It seems that our patience had run out with him, so we withdrew fellowship, unanimously. At the May 3 meeting, two more erring brothers who had joined in the big revival had to be dealt with—Charlie Hogg and James Evans. Hogg was an unemployed seventeen-year-old living with his mother. Evans appears to have been a hired hand of a local farmer. The clerk was unable to serve notice on Evans before the May 31 meeting, but Hogg appeared and was duly repentant, and we took no action against him. He would be removed from the membership, however, on January 3, 1880. Apparently he was a repeat offender. We asked Brother Owen to preach on the second Sunday each month as well as the first. We thanked the ladies of the church for cleaning and renovating the building. The Evans case was further postponed at the July 5 meeting, since the clerk still couldn't contact him.

At the July 5 meeting, however, the new constitution was presented by Brothers Murray and Moss and was adopted. It reflects some experience with erring members and indicates just how seriously the church took the matter of sinners among their number. The constitution had six articles; each except the first is divided into sections. Article 2 deals with church officers. It has fourteen sections, the last of which (the longest by far) deals with the Reference Committee and its responsibilities for investigating and reporting disagreements among members or cases of immorality or other violations of Christian character. Article 4, consisting of five sections, deals in its entirety with church discipline and procedures to be taken to withdraw fellowship from a member. It is a courtlike procedure, with a written summons (ignoring a summons could bring charges of contempt) to appear before the Reference Committee (and if necessary, before the entire church) to answer charges. A member was literally excommunicated while charges were pending—that is, forbidden to participate in communion.

Some other points of interest in the Constitution of 1879: article 2 describes the "scriptural officers" of the church as pastor and deacons, who may serve as long as they are doing their job. But in addition there are annually elected officers: three trustees, a clerk, a treasurer, a sexton, a three-member Finance Committee, and a seven-member Reference Committee that is reguired to meet at least once a month. Pastors are to be called by unanimous vote. Deacons are charged with visiting the sick, the widowed, and the poor, "to see that they are not neglected." The sexton "shall carry the keys, ring the bell, light up the Church, have fires when needed, provide water for pulpit and baptistry, and keep the floor and seats in good order." The Lord's Supper is to be observed at least quarterly (in July 1885 this was changed to the first Sunday of each month). Article 3 provides for receiving and dismissing members, and article 4, as described above, deals with discipline. Article 5 provides for the regular business meetings. They are to be held the Saturday night (later changed to Tuesday night) before the first Sunday of the month. Special meetings can be called by the Reference Committee. A quorum consists of a majority of the membership, and a majority of this quorum must be brethren (that is, men). Members are expected to attend these business meetings, and to give excuse if absent. Men who are consistently absent are subject to expulsion. Business meetings are closed except to members, people coming to offer themselves for membership, and "visiting brethren from Sister Churches."

Article 6 lays down elementary rules of parliamentary procedure, for instance, that any member who speaks must address the chair, and no member may speak twice on the same subject without permission. Article 7 deals with finance. Each member is considered responsible for a fair share of the expenses, as determined by the Finance Committee, who will visit members

to collect the money. The committee must give each member three months' notice of how much they are expected to give. Article 8 allows for amendment by two-thirds of members present and for "delegates" to be sent to associational meetings. Almost as a footnote, there is a provision that the pastor will be an ex officio member of the Reference Committee.

One comes away from a study of the constitution with a feeling that you really, really did not want to cross the Reference Committee. That is where authority in the church really lay—not with the deacons, trustees, or even the pastor.

The day after this business meeting was Sunday, July 7. At seven o'clock that evening the church met at Barefoot Mill (now Wiggins Mill) to baptize David Pulley, who had presented himself for membership at the previous night's meeting. (The church had a baptistry, of course, but it was probably a lot of trouble to put water in it just for one baptism.)

One suspects that more happened at the September 6 meeting than is recorded in the few lines. We finally took James Evans off the membership. It was time for annual election of officers, but there was some trouble with election of trustees because no one was sure who the incumbents were. After business was disposed of, "the Church heard interesting and valuable remarks by Brethren Blount, Murray, Gilliland, and Roberson." Norfleet Y. Roberson, thirty-six years old, worked at a steam mill and had joined during the big protracted meeting. Gilliland cannot be identified; he may have been a visitor. Hardy will sometimes conclude a record of a business meeting with something about what a wonderful accord there was in the meeting and how the Holy Spirit was felt to be present. Here he sums it up by this terse comment: "An interesting meeting."

Someone did some work before the October 4 meeting and determined that Mr. Blount was the only surviving trustee. We elected H. C. Moss and B. F. Briggs to complete the number. Moss reported on a meeting of the Reference Committee where they had discussed the questions "Are we in fellowship?" and "Are we walking orderly?" To everyone's relief, the committee thought we were.

Sometime late in 1879 Mr. Owen let the membership know that he would be retiring and going to Tennessee to live with his daughter and son-in-law. This presented the church with a problem. We really didn't know how to go about finding a pastor. Hooper just happened into town when we needed him, we sort of blundered into finding Lindsay, and Owen had just always been around, ever since the start. We determined to appoint a search committee: Blount, Moss, Brewer, and Hardy. On January 13, 1880, we accepted Mr. Owen's formal resignation, "assuring him that we will ever cherish for him the highest Christian love and long remembrance of his many virtues. That we commend him to the people whom he is to go, and particularly to

the Baptists, as a gentleman—an earnest Christian, a sound Baptist, and an able expounder of the Truths of God's word."

The new year began the decade of the 1880s. During the decade we would be singing "Oh My Darling Clementine" and "Love's Old Sweet Song." Sousa would write his military marches. *Treasure Island* and *Huckleberry Finn* would be published, and Sherlock Holmes would make his first appearance. The first steel-framed "skyscrapers" would redefine the American cityscape, and electricity would be used for lighting the streets of the big cities. The country would be shaken by the second assassination of a president.

On January 25, the search committee reported that after prayer, concern, and thought, they were recommending Bro. Joseph E. Carter of Lexington, Kentucky, promising him a salary of six hundred dollars. The church accepted the recommendation, and Mr. Blount was charged with working things out with Mr. Carter. There are other signs from this meeting of January 25, 1880, that Wilson Baptist Church was getting serious. Not only had we called a pastor after a deliberate search, but we also discussed the possibility of getting some hymnbooks. Apparently there had never been any before. A sore point was raised: that there never seemed to be enough money on hand to pay the cost of fuel, lights, and the services of the sexton, William Alley, a teenager who worked as a store clerk. He too had joined at the big meeting the previous May. The church decided to do something never done before: take up a collection every Sunday that services were held. This was merely a collection to meet the immediate needs of the building, but it was a new departure. The Finance Committee would still be assessing members' contributions and paying the pastor.

In March the Reference Committee got word that Wilson Vann, a single young man who worked in a print shop and had joined during the revival, was doing something not compatible with Christian character. Vann was summoned to meet with the committee, which he "cheerfully did." After talking with him, the committee decided that the report was unfounded and should not be brought before the church, but should be announced in church to keep Brother Vann from being embarrassed if reports kept circulating. The committee reported to the church that "so far as we know the Church is in fellowship and walking orderly."

There is no way to know exactly when Brother Carter assumed his duties as pastor here, but all indications are that it was very soon after he accepted the call in January.

Carter was born February 6, 1836, in Murfreesboro, North Carolina. He made a profession of faith early in life. He later withdrew from the church, pursuing a career in law, but on January 11, 1859, he renewed his profession of faith and was soon licensed to preach. He went to Tennessee for an education at Union University, which was then located in Murfreesboro, Tennes-



(Above) Priscilla Burton Carter (Winbourne, History of Hertford County), (right) Joseph E. Carter (FBC Hendersonville)



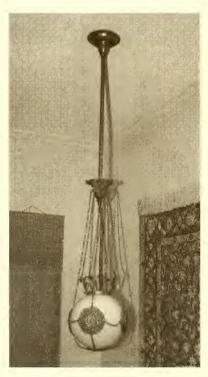
see. Here he met Priscilla Burton, a member of a wealthy, prominent family. Her grandfather was a Revolutionary War veteran, Col. Hardy Murfree. The couple was married May 14, 1861, a few days before North Carolina left the Union and joined the war. On May 15 he preached his first sermon. It was to a congregation of colored Baptists; he used John 3:16 as his text. On June 16 he received his college degree and immediately set out for his hometown in North Carolina, traveling from one Murfreesboro to another. He was ordained to the ministry on June 30, and on September 15, in the Meherrin River, conducted his first baptisms. Three of the candidates were his sisters. During the war years and the decade or so afterward the Carter family moved around quite a bit. For a while he was pastor of the church back in Murfreesboro, Tennessee, but he also served several churches in Alabama and Georgia and held a number of protracted meetings. He was pastor of Pilgrim Baptist Church of Lexington, Kentucky, when we called him as our pastor in January 1880.²

The regular monthly business meeting was held April 2, the Saturday before the first Sunday. A lot was accomplished this day. After the usual formalities of prayer, calling to order, calling of the roll and marking of absences, and reading and approving of minutes, business proceeded. The Finance Committee reported handing over to the treasurer the sum of \$80.40. We voted to make permanent the practice of passing a basket at each morning service

^{2.} Winbourne, Colonial and State Political History of Hertford County, N.C., 268–271.

"for a penny contribution to meet the incidental expenses of the church." For this purpose two men were appointed as ushers: E. B. Mayo and (probably) Weldon Taylor, two members taken in during the big protracted meeting two years back. Brother Carter had some things to say about vocal church music. Since three gentlemen were appointed as a Music Committee, to "appoint their times of practice, etc.," we can assume this was the formation of our first choir. We determined that we would meet on Sundays for worship at eleven o'clock, and also during the summer at eight o'clock in the evening. The church bell was to be rung thirty minutes before the service, and then rung from five minutes before the hour until the beginning of the service.

In May 1880 the church building underwent some improvements. We must have been feeling flush with \$122.10 in the treasury, and it would appear that Sarah Blount, GW's wife, had been active—the first indication we have



Gaslight chandelier given the church in 1880. It has since been converted to electricity. (Photo by author)

of vigorous female leadership in the congregation. The church received the gift of a stove from Mrs. G. D. Green and Mrs. John Hutchinson. They were not our members. Mr. Green was a hardware merchant (no doubt whence the stove) and a Presbyterian. Mrs. T. J. Gardner gave the church a handsome gaslight chandelier (her husband sold fixtures).3 This fixture hangs today in a private home in Chatham County, Mrs. Gardner was not a church member either, but Mrs. Blount probably knew these ladies quite well. The church gave Mrs. Blount special thanks for the money she had raised from a "festival" for the purpose of carpeting the floor and painting the inside. A committee was appointed to "go to work and have the inside of the church carpeted and to carry out the judicious expenditure of the money appropriated by Mrs. Blount." This committee of seven consisted of four men and three women, the first record of any church commit-

3. By this time there were outdoor gaslights on the streets, with a lamplighter hired by the city to see to them. Valentine, *Rise of a Southern Town*, 56.

tee with women as well as men serving. By special motion, Mrs. Blount was added to the committee. Although she was clearly a moving force, she was not yet a member of the church. Whether the committee members did the work or hired it out, we don't know. While the work on the interior of the building was being done, our congregation held services in the Methodist church. We must have been feeling good about things, for in June we were eager to have the exterior of the church painted as well, and we raised the funds for it.

At the Saturday meeting in July, the whole Carter family—or at least his wife Priscilla, older son George, and older daughter Finie—presented themselves for membership. There was a younger daughter (seven) and younger son (four) who did not become members. Perhaps the father had come earlier and prepared for the coming of the family later, or maybe it just took some time for the official letters of dismission to arrive from Lexington.

There must have been some concern about members not attending the regular monthly business meetings on Saturday. Pastor Carter had some words about this in August, and in September two of the brethren were asked to visit the membership and impress on them the importance of attending these meetings.

The new year of 1881 began with things in good order. The Finance Committee could report that just over seven hundred dollars had been collected since September 1878. In March Mr. Blount reported that during February four dollars were received for the pastor's salary. Whether he announced this with pride or embarrassment we don't know (the salary was six hundred dollars a year). We learn from the April meeting that the church had insurance on its building, since the treasurer was directed to apply any "unappropriated money" on hand to make payments. We requested the pastor to deliver a lecture about the importance of Sunday School work. This is the first mention of Sunday School at Wilson Baptist, but we cannot tell if one was actually here at the time. Also in April we began to get serious about people who were members but never seen, asking them to find churches nearer to them if they were unable to attend. In particular, nine women are named. The church would like to "know something of their spiritual condition" and let them know they would be dropped from membership if not heard from. At a June meeting letters were granted to some of these, and the others were dropped. The Reference Committee, who saw to it that the members were walking orderly, reported that nothing of importance had come to their attention but that they were "endeavoring to discharge their duties in a quiet way."

We received word from the church at Rockingham that Charlie Hogg, whom we had cast from us some months earlier, had seen the error of his ways and wanted to join the church there. We therefore took measures to readmit him to membership so that we could grant him a letter of dismission. In August we allowed Pastor Carter to enjoy a month's vacation.

The September meeting conducted its usual business, and it set a date for a special meeting on September 19 to discuss associational matters. There is no record of this meeting, perhaps because it was not held. September 19 was the day that President Garfield died, after being shot on July 2.

In October there was a bit of a flap. The Tar River Association appointed Brother Carter to preach at Toisnot one Sunday a month, for which they would pay him two hundred dollars, leaving Wilson Baptist with four hundred dollars to pay. H. C. Moss objected, on the grounds that he did not like the idea of paying preachers salaries. The church should support the pastor financially, of course, but each member should just give liberally to the cause and not call it a salary. There was some back-and-forth about this—nothing is said as to whether Mr. Carter was present or not—but finally G. W. Blount, always the more practical of the two leaders, clarified the issue by saying the matter on the floor was simply whether or not to support the action of the association's missions committee. Brother Carter would actually be functioning as a missionary. The motion to support the association passed, and Brother Moss closed with prayer.

The leadership began to be concerned about the small number of people who attended the monthly Saturday business meeting. Several entries from around this time actually name the members present, and there are sometimes fewer than ten. On Sunday, December 11, F. M. Jordan returned to Wilson, perhaps hoping for another big revival like the one of 1878. It was not to be. He preached through Wednesday, reporting that "the house was crowded, and yet not a single sinner manifested a desire to be saved." He left Wilson with a kind regard for the church, however, and particularly for Brother Carter and his family.

Churches did not provide well for their aged ministers in those days. Frank M. Jordan lived to be ninety-four. He married a second time at age fifty-seven, raised a second family, and died March 15, 1924. In his last years he self-published his autobiography and took copies of it around with him as he continued to conduct protracted meetings. He described himself as never having tasted a drop of whiskey or ever having grown whiskers. He tried to sell the books on these occasions much as musicians today sell their CDs at concerts. In his eighties he was writing letters to the *Biblical Recorder* as well

^{4.} Jordan, *Life and Labors*, 226–227. There is no record of this meeting in the church minutes, since no one joined the church, and the only records from the old days are of business meetings, such as would be called to receive new members.

as to preachers around the state, quite frankly asking for money.⁵ Among the men he wrote were John E. White, who would be our pastor in the 1890s but was then in Atlanta; President Poteat of Wake Forest College; and S. L. Morgan, pastor at Henderson, who will show up later in our story. All the responses are kind but regretful. A tender response from T. W. Chambliss, pastor of First Baptist in Wilson, dated June 13, 1916, gently lets the old man down, but says he will pass his letter as well as a letter he had recently written to the *BR* on to Mr. Willard Moss, Mrs. G. W. Blount, and Sister Culpepper. He tells Mr. Jordan that they will gather a gift for him and informs him that Sister Culpepper was at the time the only member of First Baptist still living who joined the church during his 1878 protracted meeting.⁶ The little committee did collect six dollars, which Mr. Moss sent to Jordan's home in Calvert, North Carolina.⁷ Brother Jordan is buried in Riverside Cemetery in Asheville.

Joseph E. Carter had been a vigorous leader for Wilson Baptist. When the church was redecorated, there must have been some trouble with people tramping mud in from the street, so he went out and bought a couple of mats for a dollar apiece and charged them to the church, and the church paid. He was an energetic preacher. An obituary recalls that "his exertions in the pulpit sometimes called for the apprehensions of his more phlegmatic brethren, lest he should hasten his end by too much vehemence." The writer of the piece recalled that once in Wilson he cautioned Carter against cutting his life short by such activity. Carter was lying down at the time, but with that remark he rose and said, "I can live longer in twenty years than you can in forty!" He was remembered for leading a campaign for prohibition in 1881, but this was "regarded by a large majority of his brethren of the ministry as unwise and impolitic for a minister of the gospel."

Carter left us in 1882 to go to Hendersonville, where he lived the rest of his life, spending some of that time as editor of the *Western North Carolina Baptist* and, after its merger with the *Biblical Recorder*, of that publication as well. He served as president of the short-lived Judson College in Hendersonville, said to have been the first coeducational school in the state. He was the author of two small books, *Baptists and the Higher Liberty* (1875) and *Distinctive Baptist Principles* (1883). Among these principles he lists "The

^{5.} BR, May 30, 1917.

^{6.} John E. White (March 4, 1915), William Louis Poteat (November 16, 1917), S. L. Morgan (June 17, 1917), and T. W. Chambliss (June 13, 1916) to F. M. Jordan, F. M. Jordan Papers, BCNC-WFU.

^{7.} Willard M. Moss to F. M. Jordan (July 12–16 [sic], 1916), F. M. Jordan Papers.

^{8.} Wilson Mirror, March 6, 1889. It may seem strange today that fellow ministers would think a preacher out of line for strongly arguing against liquor, but it would have been unusual at the time. More about this in chapter 12.

Private Interpretation of the Scriptures," in which he states that anyone has the right to interpret the Bible according to his best judgment and that there is no power that can compel him to renounce what others see as errors. He speaks for "Religious Liberty," arguing for the separation of church and state and giving Baptists proper credit for establishing this as the standard in the United States. He also lists the independence of each congregation, membership only to the converted (believer's baptism), baptism by immersion, and closed communion. This latter question occupies considerable space, since he takes seriously the arguments for open communion. Carter was a keen thinker and a clear writer. Always careful and honest with money, while on his deathbed he called his wife's attention to an outstanding debt that he had not yet paid, although payment was not yet due. The rather long obituary in the Wilson Mirror began: "No tidings ever reached the people of Wilson with such painful shock as did that of the death of Rev. Joseph E. Carter," He was a good man, and it was under his leadership that we gained traction. He knew what a church should be and how to lead one and develop its possibilities. 10 He died suddenly at home at noon on Sunday, February 24, 1889. He was taken for burial in his hometown of Murfreesboro, North Carolina, His wife Priscilla went to live with a nephew in her hometown of Murfreesboro, Tennessee, where she died and is buried.

^{9.} Minutes of the Fifty-Ninth Annual Meeting of the Baptist State Convention, 1889, 38.

^{10.} The obituary published in the minutes of the Baptist State Convention for 1889 mentions (p. 39) that his diary showed that he had baptized 405 people. This diary, if it still exists, could prove an invaluable source of information for a number of churches and institutions. I have tried every way I could think of, gone down every path, looking in archives and searching for living relatives, to no avail. May the next historian have better luck. Union University, now in Jackson, Tenn., would really like to have access to it.

Chapter 10

Three Pastors Trying to Get Paid

1882–1889 (William T. Jones, James M. McManaway, Thomas P. Lide)

The laborer is worthy of his reward.

—1 TIMOTHY 5:18 KJV

MONG THE PUBLIC HEALTH PROBLEMS towns wrestled with until not all that long ago was rabies. Particularly in the summer, mad dogs were a genuine worry. The Wilson town council was much concerned with the problem in the summer of 1882 and passed a number of tough ordinances directed at dog owners. A special ordinance required owners of bull terriers or bulldogs to keep them muzzled. Dogs not properly tagged and collared were simply to be killed. No euphemisms in those days.

Our next pastor came to us in the summer of 1882. There is no record of how he was called or when he arrived, but he was here conducting a Tuesday night business meeting on July 4, 1882, and on the Tuesday night meeting of August 15 presented his letter from FBC of Wilmington, his place of birth. On May 22, 1883, he offered his resignation, in order to accept another pulpit. We know nothing of where that was, but in January 1884 he became pastor of the two churches in Morehead City and Beaufort.

William T. Jones was a twenty-seven-year-old bachelor fresh from the seminary in Louisville when he came to us. His time with us was short, but so was his life. He died of kidney problems, what was then called Bright's disease, at age forty-three, in 1899. He pastored churches in North Carolina, Virginia, and Maryland, never staying long in the same place. His longest pastorate was his last, at the Laurel Hill Baptist Church of Charles City County,

Virginia. He was brought to back to North Carolina for burial in Morehead City, which he considered home. There he had met his wife, whom he married in 1885. Apparently there were no children. Mrs. Jones moved to Morehead City and taught school there for forty years, as well as being active in the local church. She died there in 1940.

We cannot know if the Wilson Baptist Church was holding services on Sunday, November 18, 1883, since we were not yet a "full-time" church, but something most remarkable happened that day: at noon the sun stood still for twelve minutes. Or at least the clock did. The city of Wilson had probably been operating on "railroad time" for years. As long as travel was by horse, the difference in sun time between two places such as, say, Wilson and Philadelphia, was insignificant, but when scheduled railroad service started running north and south, the towns up and down the line standardized their times to the time set by whatever railroad ran through. It was the modern thing to do. When the railroads started running west, though, the time problems became much greater. Congress dithered with the question a long while, but the railroads finally got together and simply decreed on their own that at noon on November 18, 1883, the country would be divided into four time zones of approximately 15 degrees width. The standard for the eastern zone was the 75th meridian, which passes through Philadelphia and by Cape Hatteras. Wilson is at 78 degrees west longitude, a difference of twelve minutes. If we had preaching that day, it would be interesting to know whether the preacher felt free to take advantage of the extra twelve minutes.

Later in November we agreed with the church in Tarboro that we would continue to share a minister, to be paid one thousand dollars a year, split between the two churches. The candidate chosen was James Meador McManaway, coming to us from Midway, Kentucky. Midway was his first church after leaving seminary in Louisville. McManaway was born in Bedford County, Virginia, in 1855, and attended what was then known as Richmond College, where he was an outstanding student, particularly given to reading substantial works of philosophy. He was a student pastor in several churches

^{1.} An obituary by C. L. Wilson appeared in different forms in several sources, including the *BR* of September 17, 1899, and (apparently) the *Religious Herald* from about the same date. This obituary has Wilson Baptist Church as one that Jones served during his years as college student. He graduated from Wake Forest College in 1879 and served us in 1882–1883. If he did any supply work here during his student days there is nothing in the church records about it, but it could be true. That would have been during Thomas R. Owens here-again-gone-again pastorate. There is also information in Hannah, *History of Laurel Hill Baptist Church*, 62–64; Andrew, *One Hundred Years* . . . *Siler City*, 9; and *Our Christian History* [of Morehead City], 16.

^{2.} Our Christian History, 175-176.

in the area while in college. He attended Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville and, while a student there, married a Texas girl, Mary Robertson Morgan. When the McManaway couple came to Wilson late in 1883 they were still childless, but two of their sons would be born in Wilson. Although McManaway is recorded as chairing a business meeting on December 3, 1883, he and his wife presented their letters for membership at the Tuesday night meeting, February 19, 1884. The pastor became known to everyone in town as "Mr. Mac."

During the early part of 1884 there was discussion about buying an organ for the church. Minutes for March 4 say that "the organ question was brought up," which implies that it had been talked about for some time ear-



James Meador McManaway (*History of First Baptist Church of Shelby*, image courtesy of North Carolina Baptist Collection, Z. Smith Reynolds Library, Wake Forest University)

lier. They postponed any action, but at a later meeting took a vote.³ The vote of each member is recorded by name. There were twenty-nine votes in favor of the organ (including the pastor and his wife and G. W. Blount). Seven voted themselves as indifferent; four, including H. C. Moss, said they would support the majority, and one member, D. L. Hardy, voted against it. More about the organ question in chapter 29.

This would be Brother Moss's last vote. He died later in April, and on the 29th the church voted on a memorial notice for the *Biblical Recorder*:

Whereas it has pleased our Heavenly Father to remove from our midst our Dearly loved Brother H. C. Moss; and whereas we feel it in our hearts to give expression to our sorrow, and to put upon record some testimonial of our love and appreciation; and to convey whatever of condolence and sympathy we may

3. There is an error in the records somewhere. The minutes for April 8 record a vote on the organ, on which H. C. Moss voted to go along with the majority. The problem is that according to the *Wilson Advance* of April 11, 1884, Moss died on Saturday, April 5, and his funeral was conducted at the church on Monday, April 7. Tuesday, April 8, would be the regular time for a business meeting, but it seems that Brother Moss was with them only in spirit.

be able to his stricken family therefore—Resolved—That we feel our loss to be immeasurable; that we find separation only in Divine Grace. That fountain of comfort and of help whenever he drew such rich draughts, and which he so often commended to us and to others. We sorrow for him, yet rejoice that he is in the presence of Jesus, in Whose presence is Life forevermore. We miss him and will continue to miss him and hope never while mingling together here to feel that we do not miss him and sorrow for his absence for us. The sorrow for the dead loved ones is one from which we refuse to be divorced—we would name it and keep his memory ever fresh in our minds. To his immediate family upon whom the separation falls most heavily, and who feel it most keenly, we can only say, look to the source of all comforts. That Fountain of Love and Pity; look to Jesus: look to the "Mercy Seat"—where Jesus answers prayers. No words can alleviate your pangs or assuage your sorrow. Let the consciousness of His Blessedness in the Home of the Saint be your Comfort and Consolation. In the presence of so great bereavement we can employ no words expressive of our sympathy that do not seem tame and passionless—nor can be found responsive to poignancy of our grief. To Him whom he loved—In Whose presence he found Comfort and Joy, to Jesus and his love we commend you.

The committee drafting the memorial consisted of G. W. Blount, D. L. Hardy, and B. J. Cobb.⁴ The document lacks a bit for grammatical coherence, but the church felt it had a lot to say. Moss's was the first death among us of a prominent and influential lay leader.

At the September 9 meeting of 1884 young Collier Cobb presented his letter from Waynesville to join us. This is the son of Needham Bryan Cobb (chapter 3), who was to make a name for himself in later years as a prominent geologist. He came here to teach drawing, designing, and penmanship at the Wilson State Normal School.⁵

With the dawning of the new year, January 1885, the year the Baptist Children's Homes of North Carolina began their work, the congregation decided to get tough with members who were not attending the monthly Tuesday night business meetings. For some time now the minutes of the meetings

^{4.} Cobb had joined during the protracted meeting of 1878 and was becoming a leader. At the time he was the church clerk.

^{5.} School circular, Cobb Family Papers, folder 3, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, UNC–Chapel Hill.

had been recording the names of absentees, particularly those of the men. We were concerned about four members especially: W. H. Farmer, a fortyfive-year-old grocer; his wife, Julia; his mother-in-law, Celia Darden; and A. T. Bunn, a forty-five-year-old gunsmith who was in business with Farmer. These people had been notified that they should appear and account for their absences. Mr. Farmer had written a letter to the church stating that he had every intention of continuing his "course of conduct." This was a challenge. Not only had Mr. Farmer defied the church with his refusal to appear: he also went on in his letter to level accusations of immoral conduct against several other members. The church resolved not to toss the Farmer family and Mr. Bunn out, but to excuse them from attendance for a year and not call



Collier Cobb, probably during his time in Wilson (Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill)

their names at roll calls, hoping that they might resolve to do better and "return to their duty." The church also had the clerk write Mr. Farmer in particular, demanding that he name the people he had charged with immoral conduct. Further business this night consisted of naming brethren to committees, appointing Sister Rhoda Winbourne as sexton, and appointing a deacon to take the place of H. C. Moss. They did this by casting lots. B. F. Briggs was chosen.⁶

At the February meeting the church received a "verbal report," which we may assume to mean "not written," from W. H. Farmer, who is still referred to as "Brother Farmer." It was referred to the Reference Committee. Some significant additions were made to the membership in the spring of 1885. At a special meeting Monday, April 20, Vernon Moss, H. C. Moss's twenty-three-year-old son, made a profession of faith, and he was baptized the next night. At another special meeting on May 17 the twenty-two-year-old Cicero Culpepper was received for baptism. These new members would provide hearty leadership in the coming decades.

On June 9 we disposed of the matters left hanging from January. Letters were received from W. H. Farmer and A. T. Bunn requesting that their names

and those of their wives, as well as Mrs. Darden, Farmer's mother-in-law, be removed from the membership. We complied, unanimously. There were obviously some harsh feelings.

The "special meetings" the records tell of were evidently of another revival. No visiting preacher is mentioned, but that does not mean there was none. Special meetings are mentioned between April 20 and July 14, during which time fifty new members were taken in. McManaway is always mentioned as the moderator, but this seems to be only the formality of the pastor calling on a vote to receive the new members after an invitation. In June, Josephus Daniels, then a student in Chapel Hill, wrote to his mother, the postmistress in Wilson: "The Baptists are having a good meeting, I hear. Mr. George Blount told me that his wife had joined. I was glad to hear this. Mr. Blount received a telegram while he was in Smithfield conveying the good news. He was very happy in consequence. . . . It seems to me that the Baptists are getting ahead of us in Wilson. They seem to be more devoted to their church and to have better meetings."

In other business during July, the church voted to go to "the envelope system of raising revenue." Envelopes were distributed. It is not clear whether these were printed envelopes such as we use today, or simply envelopes in which one could make an offering without it being visible in the basket. Apparently some people put buttons in envelopes. It does imply an increasing amount of sophistication in the administration of the church. Nothing is said about the employment of staff, so we can probably assume that Pastor McManaway and the sexton were the church's only paid employees. The month after this the pastor would be appointed a committee of one to visit the members and find out what they would pledge to the "church fund." (The word "pledge" is not used, but that is what is meant.) During July Mrs. McManaway gave birth to the couple's first child, Howard.

The big event in October was the meeting of the Tar River Association at Wilson Baptist Church, October 8–10. An "entertainment" committee was appointed to see to arrangements, and everything appears to have been successful. The church seems to have been spruced up a little bit, and someone got the railroad to agree to give special rates to those attending. Attendance was large at the associational meeting.

There is record of a "special meeting" on October 25 to receive two new members. October 25 was a Sunday, and this may indicate that the giving of an invitation at the end of the sermon was now being practiced, with a "special [business] meeting" called when someone responded.

^{7.} The *Wilson Mirror* of November 16, 1892, has a funny paragraph about how much easier it is to be a cheerful giver now that no one can see what you're giving. Several Wilson churches were using envelopes by that time.

In November the Baptist State Convention met in Reidsville, and our pastor, James McManaway, preached the convention sermon on John 3:21. Someone remarked: "It had the sweep of an avalanche rushing down the mountain side. It had the power of the winds, that rend the forest. It had the strength of billows, that engulf navies. It was a tornado of logic, that was irresistible. It was a cyclone of argumentation scattering opposition and hastening on to settled convictions." If his preaching at the Wilson Baptist Church was like that, it's no wonder the church was growing so rapidly.

The new year of 1886 had some notable moments. In February the first train carrying oranges from California to the east coast made its cross-country journey. In May Coca-Cola made its first appearance. In June bachelor President Grover Cleveland married young Frances Folsom, the country's sweetheart. In July the Benz Motorwagen, the first gasoline-powered automobile, was introduced. After about thirty years of fighting the U.S. Army, Geronimo surrendered in September. On October 28, the Statue of Liberty was dedicated.

March 1886 saw another protracted meeting taking place at Wilson Baptist. Thomas Needham of Philadelphia was the preacher, while a Mr. Avis visited to lead in song service. This tells us something about the progress of the interest in music in the church. We probably had the organ by this time, though the records have no indication of when it was bought or installed. It was probably what we could call today a parlor organ. The presence of a song director for the revival probably emphasized the importance of the meeting, which began on March 14, with Mr. Needham preaching. On March 24, Dr. J. D. Hufham, whom we met in chapter 8, arrived to continue services until the meeting came to a close on April 1. The preaching is said to have been "both evening and night . . . to immense crowds." (The word "evening" probably meant what we would call "afternoon.") By the end of the meeting twenty-five new members had been added. The church minutes record the precise dates that each person came forward, but it seems that all were accepted into the group on Sunday, April 4. On that day Collier Cobb excitedly wrote to his mother: "The meeting in our church has closed. Today twentyfive received the right hand of church fellowship. The Sunday School too, has improved very much."

On August 31, we had a routine business meeting, but the records show nothing about the most exciting event of the day. It was probably just about to happen when the meeting broke up that evening. It was an earthquake. Estimated to be at least 6.6 on the Richter scale, it did horrendous damage in Charleston, where forty thousand people were left homeless, but it was defi-

^{8.} BR, November 18, 1885. The quotation describing McManaway's preaching is quoted here and there, but I have never found its source.

nitely felt as far away as Wilson. Two years later, September 5, 1888, the *Wilson Mirror* published a dramatic editorial recalling the experience—though one should take into account that almost all the *Mirror*'s editorial writing tended toward the dramatic.

Despite the numerical growth in its rolls, there was some concern during the year over the church's financial situation. In December the Finance Committee reported that basket contributions during the year had amounted to \$84.31 and that we actually owed Pastor McManaway \$277.33. Pledges were taken amounting to \$67, and then a committee of four women and four men was appointed to get out there and raise the money. This concern continued well into 1887 and possibly contributed to the pastor's decision to offer his resignation, which he did, effective November 1. In his brief letter to the church he mentioned no dissatisfaction; he merely stated that he felt "constrained to resign . . . with an unusual degree of regret." The resolution then adopted by the church says, among much else: "He came to us in our weakness. We have been built up in members, influence, and in Christian strength. . . . We sincerely regret that there exists any cause on account of which he has seen fit to sever his connection with this church; but we feel impressed that a sense of duty hath prompted him to take the step." It is a warm and appreciative document, but there is at that one point a slight hint that something was not going right. One suspects that salary may have been a factor, especially since at a business meeting on November 6 the unfinished business taken up had to do with the pastor's salary. In fact, we still owed Mr. McManaway some money. Once again a committee was appointed to solicit pledges from the members, this time a committee of three men.

The community as well felt a loss with Mr. Mac's leaving. The *Wilson Mirror* (October 12, 1887) wrote of him as "very highly respected by all the denominations in town, for all recognize in him a true, sincere, sunny-hearted, liberal minded christian gentleman . . . and will ever nurse for him and his lovely wife the sweetest and fondest memories."

McManaway's career after leaving Wilson is hard to fill in completely. He pastored FBC of Shelby, North Carolina, from November 1887 to June 1890, when he moved to Georgia, and later to Missouri. He was pastor at Fayette, Missouri, and at a town on the Mississippi River named Louisiana. For a while he edited *Word and Way*, the Missouri Baptist state paper. Somewhere along the way Ouachita College in Arkansas granted him an honorary doctorate. He was back in North Carolina, at Waynesville, from 1910 to 1914. During those years Mrs. McManaway left Waynesville to keep house for her children while the oldest were in school at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville. The father got up there to see them as often as he could. It was a sacrifice for the family, but they proved to be a remarkable group. Howard and Norman, the two oldest, who were born in Wilson, both be-

came prominent educators of the deaf. Howard was superintendent of the Virginia School for the Deaf and the Blind, and Norman was with the Volta Bureau in Washington, DC, today known as the Alexander Graham Bell Association for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. Another son, James, became one of the world's leading authorities on Shakespeare, authored many books and articles, and for a while was director of the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington.

There was also a Judson McManaway, probably named after his father's best friend from seminary days. He was called into service during World War I, and within a week of reporting for duty had died of the deadly flu epidemic that was devastating American military camps at the time and would soon be sweeping the world. He apparently died at Fort Sherman in Ohio. Another brother, probably Norman, went to bring the body home and was simply directed to where the corpses lay in piles; there were too many for accurate records to be kept. Norman would have a daughter the next year and would use Judson as her first name. Perhaps they called her "Judy," but she was named for her uncle.

All three of the surviving brothers served as deacons in Baptist churches. Their sister Marjory, described as talented, attended college at Westhampton, married a man named Arthur Flynn, and lived in Washington, DC.

Mr. and Mrs. McManaway lived with James in Charlottesville during the last four years of the father's life, while he was an invalid. He died in Richmond on April 23, 1922, and is buried in Charlottesville. His old friend Judson Taylor wrote of him, "His preaching was strong rather than ornate, and yet it did not lack the graces of oratory. . . . He had evangelistic gifts, but he was distinctively a student and a teacher. . . . Dr. McManaway finished his course with joy. . . . His life is a lesson in devotion, fidelity, love, service, uncomplaining submission to the divine will." 10

Meanwhile, back in Wilson, Mr. Briggs reported for the Reference Committee that they had had to meet about the behavior of some members who "needed to be disciplined" because they were "walking ungodly." They were ordered to appear before the church at the December 6 meeting. Some of these folks appeared and were duly repentant. At least two of them appear to have been older teenagers. A couple of the women of the congregations were appointed to call on another and inquire as to her spiritual condition.

^{9.} On conditions at Camp Sherman, see Barry, *The Great Influenza*, 358, 371. Sherman was one of the first army camps to be struck, and the one with the highest death rate. Of those who caught the flu, 36 percent developed pneumonia, and 61 percent of those died. Pneumonia was the usual cause of death.

^{10.} See Taylor, *Virginia Baptist Ministers*, 6th series, 139–141; J. Judson Taylor, *Virginia Baptist Annual*, 1922, 198–200; Underwood, *Faith of Our Fathers*, 235–236.

Another woman had written a contrite letter to the church asking forgiveness, and it was granted.

We called J. D. Hufham of Scotland Neck as our pastor, but he turned us down. We then asked if he could come part-time, and he turned us down on that, too. On Sunday, October 23, Thomas Park Lide came up from Mullins, South Carolina, to preach at both morning and evening services. That week (October 26) the Wilson Mirror published a long and highly complimentary description of his pulpit style, saying, among much else, that Lide "was very felicitous in the use of his illustrations, which were indeed most apt, graphic, forceful. He is a quick, ready, fluent speaker, and employs good language with which to convey his thoughts." At the last meeting of the year, December 22, we had an election to cast votes on whether we should ask Joseph E. Carter back, or call Thomas P. Lide. The vote was sixteen to six for Lide, and then the call was made unanimous. He would be offered a salary of six hundred dollars a year plus a house to live in. Before the meeting broke up, one member insisted on making a motion that one W. C. Gorham be expelled from the membership. Objection was made, and the matter was deferred. Mr. Gorham, who had been a member since 1880, was a lightning-rod salesman, an occupation that had a rather shady reputation.

Thomas Park Lide arrived to be our pastor very early in 1888, and the church agreed for him to preach one Sunday a month at another church without any reduction in his salary at Wilson. Money continued to be a problem, though. In July the pastor had a serious talk about the situation with the members at a business meeting. It resulted in the pastor being asked to appoint a committee of three "to collect funds necessary to carry on all the expenses of the church and pay all outside debts and that every member be requested to pay something toward this fund." We can probably rest assured that the preachers in these old days had enough to eat. People almost certainly came by the parsonage with sacks of fresh produce and eggs from the farms. These really were hard economic times, and in Wilson the economy revolved around agriculture, especially tobacco, which was steadily increasing in importance. Money came in during the fall and played out during the summer. This was a hardship on enterprises such as churches, whose expenditures were more or less constant throughout the year. This was to continue to affect our church's economy right up through the pastorate of William Bussey.

In August G. W. Blount took his family on a vacation of several weeks to Hickory. During that time he had the opportunity to visit with former pastor Joseph E. Carter, who wrote to the *Wilson Mirror* (August 22) about the visit. The paper spoke highly of both men. The editor of the *Mirror* was G. W. Blount's younger brother Henry.

A protracted meeting was held in October; Needham Bryan Cobb himself

came to start the preaching. Later Thomas Needham, a Philadelphia evangelist who often traveled with his own tent, continued the preaching. It began about October 14, and on Saturday, November 5, Pastor Lide baptized nineteen new members. The meeting continued through mid-November, with Henry W. Battle of New Bern taking on the duties. The *Wilson Mirror* (November 7, 1888) said of him, "While not an evangelist or revivalist in the technical sense, yet he is a preacher of great spiritual power, and his ministry has been wonderfully blessed wherever he has been, and we may expect like blessings to follow his ministry here." The next week's issue praised him as having "a brawny brain and magnificent culture." The *Wilson Advance* of November 15 ran a shorter piece, but with similar praise. We will hear more of Mr. Battle later.

But while new members were being added, on December 4 the Reference Committee recommended that sixteen names be dropped from the roll and that fellowship be withdrawn from one, Ida Boykin. Apparently she had done something that offended the propriety of the church (or the committee), but the other names were probably a culling of inactive members, perhaps those who had moved from the community. They do not seem to appear in the 1900 census." There may have been some problems related to a particular member, referred to as Sister A. T. Austin in the three-line record of a special conference after a prayer meeting on January 1. At this time she was restored to fellowship, and her request for a letter of dismission was granted. Between the meetings of December 4 and January 1, two sheets, pages 181–184, are missing from the ledger. An F. A. Austin was among those dropped at the December 4 meeting. Nothing is ever mentioned about an A. T. Austin being disfellowshipped. But given that on January 1 she is restored to fellowship for the sole purpose of getting a church letter to take somewhere else, one is led to suspect that something unpleasant happened during December that someone did not want remembered. It would not be the only time that our church books were deliberately deprived of valuable content (a historian would say vandalized), albeit with good intention.

Our Tuesday night meeting on January 8, 1889, must have been quite interesting. Some good news was reported. The treasurer could say that the receipts and expenditures for the previous year had been \$1,126.11 (notice we are talking in four digits now) and that all debts had been settled in full. There had been no deaths during 1888, and our membership stood at a respectable 169. We received a few new members and granted letters of dismission to a few others. But then came the bombshell. The pastor, Mr. Lide, offered his resignation, to take effect immediately. The "brethren" debated the matter a few minutes, and the resignation was accepted. Immediately

^{11.} A fire destroyed the records of the 1890 census.

A. N. Daniel moved that a pastor be called and that the pastor be T. P. Lide. The motion was approved, and a committee of three was appointed to "wait upon the Rev. T. P. Lide at their earliest convenience and inform him of the action of the church." It's not clear whether the pastor was present during the discussion that followed his resignation, but it rather sounds like he left the building so that the "brethren" could have their discussion. Any conference with Mr. Lide was unsuccessful, though, for on January 22 he requested that letters be granted for him and his family to join the Santee Church in South Carolina. All the evidence suggests that Wilson Baptist was taken aback by Mr. Lide's decision and earnestly tried to talk him out of it. An article in the Wilson Mirror of January 30, 1889, describes Mr. Lide's last Sunday, January 27.

The Rev. Mr. Lide preached his farewell sermon in the Baptist Church in this place on Sunday night, and took leave of a congregation that was most devotedly attached to him. His ministry here has been so sweet, so tender, so gentle, so loveful and so beautiful, that all look upon his pastorate as a God-sent blessing to this community; and when he, in his touching remarks, so tenderly pointed them to that everlasting Sabbath "where congregations never break up," the river of the heart overflowed its banks, and many an eye was swept with the briny waves of fast-flowing grief.

There followed a resolution adopted by the church but not in our records:

In taking leave of our beloved pastor, we desire to express to him and to those to whom he goes our high appreciation of his services . . . and our regrets at not being able to retain him. . . . We testify to his Godly walk and earnest, Christ-like example of meekness, gentleness and unvarying kindness to all, in every condition in life among us—the peer of the highest in the social circle, the friend and adviser of the humblest and most obscure of the people of God. He has endeared himself to our people, and in sundering the tie that binds us as pastor and people, he makes all hearts to mourn. We shall miss him around our family altars, our firesides, our sick-beds, and in the tender ministrations and all the relations of pastor, friend, and Christian brother. May the blessings of our Heavenly Father and the Lord Jesus Christ attend him, and that the Spirit of Grace may always animate and encourage him in all his labors, wherever he

may go. And we specially convey to our sister, his wife, and his interesting family, our most sincere regrets at our separation. They are in deed and in truth a pastor's family—helpful and conspicuous in every good work.

At the Sunday night service, he baptized a new member. Not long after that he and his family made their way south.

Not much is known about Mr. Lide. A native of South Carolina, he was a strikingly handsome forty-two years old when he came to us with his wife Carrie and a family of four. The oldest daughters too, Mary and Carrie, brought their letters from the Mullins Church in South Carolina. There was also a ten-year-old (Martha Everline) they nicknamed Daisy. An older son, Robert, was apparently away at Wake Forest College. It doesn't sound like we did anything to offend Lide (other than being slow to pay him), but his year in Wilson may have been the only time in his life spent outside of South Carolina. (He may have been in the Confederate service in Virginia, but this is not clear.) He was born in the Darlington District there in 1845, and graduated from Furman in 1867 and from the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (then still in Greenville, South Carolina) in 1870. On October 2 of that year the Mechanicsville Church in Darlington County ordained him to the ministry, and on October 26 he and Carrie (Martha Caroline) were married in the First Baptist Church of Greenville, South Carolina. He held nine pastorates in South Carolina before coming to Wilson. During that time he was a





Thomas P. and Carrie Lide (Darlington County [SC] Historical Commission)

Marion County school commissioner for six years, and at least ran for a seat in the state legislature. He served fifteen South Carolina churches after leaving us; at times he held more than one. He died while pastor of Bethel Baptist Church in the Privateer area of Sumter County and is buried there. Carrie had passed on in 1898 while her husband was pastor in Barnwell.¹²

^{12.} Most of the information about Thomas Park Lide comes from information collected by Mildred Caroline Lide Fair, and in the possession of the Darlington County [SC] Historical Commission.

Chapter 11

This Petty Pace from Day to Day

1889-1892 (Miles S. Read, Henry W. Battle)

Those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel.

-1 CORINTHIANS 9:14 RSV

OR THE NEXT SEVERAL WEEKS after Lide's departure, the pulpit was filled by guest ministers, often preaching what we could call trial sermons. The *Wilson Mirror* for March 27, 1889, mentions that we heard some fine preaching during that time. The quest narrowed down to three candidates: Jones (perhaps the same W. T. Jones who was earlier our pastor), Battle (of whom we will have more to say later), and Miles S. Read. The pulpit committee recommended Read, and after a couple of ballots he was elected, but not without dissent. When it was moved that the call be made unanimous by a standing vote, four or five members kept their seat, apparently holdouts for Jones. The call went to Mr. Read, who would be offered a salary of one thousand dollars plus "a suitable house to live in."

We installed the thirty-seven-year-old Mr. Read as pastor on Sunday, May 5, 1889, and made quite a ceremony of it. Dr. C. T. Bailey, editor of the *Biblical Recorder*, came from Raleigh to welcome the new pastor to the state, and our old friend J. D. Hufham came down from Scotland Neck to welcome him to the Tar River Association. Also on the program were the pastors of the Methodist, Presbyterian, and Disciples churches to welcome him to Wilson. Of Read's first sermon, the *Wilson Mirror* reported on May 8, "He has

^{1.} Wilson Mirror, May 1, 1889.

already got his hands upon the heart-strings, and he is drawing our people to him in a very fond and affectionate nearness. Earnest and strong and impressive in the pulpit, agreeable and sunny-natured and magnetic in the social circle, he has those virtues which will make him a popular and successful Pastor." In the July 17 issue he is singled out as "delightful and very popular." At the Tuesday night meeting on June 4 he presented his letter for membership, along with his wife Alethia and sixteen-year-old daughter Clara.

Elsewhere in the country, on May 31, after torrential rains, a flood destroyed Johnstown, Pennsylvania, killing over 2,200 people. It was the first natural disaster to which the newly formed American Red Cross responded. Clara Barton herself led the effort and stayed for five months.

Miles S. Read was born in North Carolina about 1852. He had intended to go into the ministry of the Episcopal Church, but while in Baltimore in 1873 came under the influence of Dr. Richard Fuller, pastor of Eutaw Place Baptist Church, now Woodbrook Baptist Church; our pastor Douglas Murray served this church as an associate early in his ministry. Fuller was a noted leader, a founder of and the second president of the Southern Baptist Convention. He himself had begun as Episcopalian. Read, along with his brother William, was baptized by Fuller. He soon began preaching regularly at a mission church in Baltimore that grew into the Shiloh Baptist Church. This body, which later became Grace Baptist, ordained him to the ministry. By 1880 the two Read brothers had married, and both were students at Crozer Theological Seminary in Upland, Pennsylvania, as well as assistants to the pastor of Wyoming Baptist Church in Wyoming, Delaware. In 1882–1883 Miles served a field of churches on the eastern shore of Virginia: Atlantic, Chincoteague, and Modest Town. Though he was pastor of those churches, he and his wife remained members of Seventh Baptist in Baltimore.² They moved their membership to Franklin when Read became its pastor in 1883. While there he was active in promoting the temperance cause and supported disciplinary actions taken by the church against certain members. In 1887 there were some rumors spread about Read that caused him to offer his resignation from the Franklin church. The resignation was accepted, but he was immediately recalled, which he also accepted. The rumors apparently claimed that the only reason he had become a Baptist was that the Episcopalians turned him down. An investigation showed that he had never applied for the Episcopal ministry. In 1887 a Miles S. Read is listed in the Public Ledger Almanac as having a connection with Thirty-fourth Street Baptist Church in Philadelphia, but perhaps this is another person.³ The history of the Franklin church indicates that he resigned in 1889, at which time he came our way. Our records have

^{2.} White, *History of the Baptists on the Eastern Shore*, 81–98.

^{3.} Weishampel, *History of Baptist Churches in Maryland*, 166, 179; Cook, *Delaware Baptists*, 121; *Public Ledger Almanac*, 1886, 15.

it that he was serving as pastor of a Baptist church in Suffolk, Virginia, when he answered the call to come to Wilson, but Franklin and Suffolk are near each other; perhaps he served Baptists in both places. He certainly served Boykins Baptist Church (1883–1886) and Newsoms Baptist Church (1884–1889). These communities are also near Franklin.⁴

During the spring and summer some new members trickled in. A couple of the church ladies must have been dissatisfied with something: in May they asked that they be removed from the church membership, and we complied. The regular Tuesday night meeting on July 9, 1889, had particular significance. A. N. Daniel, who had joined the church in 1884, asked whether it was not time to put up a new building. Several brethren responded, and the church voted unanimously that we should do just that. A committee of six men and four women was appointed to search for suitable properties in town that might be available and at what prices.

In September a church stalwart, James Murray, died. He had joined the church in 1871, when Carter Lindsay was our pastor. He had been in poor health and unable to attend church for several years, but a resolution passed by the congregation honored him for being "ever ready with hand and heart to promote [the church's] interest; as a counselor, ripe in wisdom, full of love to the brethren."

In October Wilson Baptist Church had one of its big, successful protracted meetings. It began on Sunday, October 13, and went through Thursday, October 31. A preacher from Suffolk, Virginia, named Saunders⁵ did the preaching, and around twenty new members were added, with baptisms being conducted Saturday, October 26, and Sunday, November 3. The *Wilson Mirror* for October 23 said of Saunders's preaching:

In his sermons there was no selfish and vainful attempt at rhetorical display, for it seemed that his mission was to woo and win, and every line breathed the sweet aroma of christian charity, and every sentence was a well formed link in the golden chain of Gospel truth. There was no dazzling flight into the heavens of science, no diving down into the riches of theological lore, no grand burst of "winged thought" into the starry realms of eloquence, no artistic wreathing of the flowers of rhetoric into the garlands of fancy.

In other words, no language like the editor of the *Mirror* used. Among the dozen who offered themselves for membership on Sunday, November 3, was Mrs. M. S. Read, relation to the pastor unknown, perhaps his mother.

^{4.} Hudgins, Generation to Generation, 30–36; Coleman, In the Midst, 10; Services of Dedication, Newsoms Baptist Church, May 25, 1975.

^{5.} Wilson Mirror, October 23, 1889.

G. W. Blount was not named among the members appointed to the committee in October to investigate available properties for a new church building, but on December 3 he reported that the committee had bought a lot from Amos J. Hines, a recent mayor, for five thousand dollars. It was at the corner of Pine and West Nash, with 218 feet on Pine and 108 feet on Nash. A few days later Mr. Blount, along with B. F. Briggs and A. N. Daniel, were appointed trustees for taking out the mortgage.

With the new year came an annual conference for review of finances and election of officers. The church was found to be behind by \$119.92 in paying Pastor Read's salary and was also in debt to "another brother" for \$49.25 (Lide?). Three new deacons were elected—not chosen by lot: E. L. Middleton, T. C. Wilson, and J. J. Atkinson. Ninety-five votes were cast. We now had five deacons. Sometime during the February 4 meeting, the pastor excused himself, and "the question of finances and indebtedness of the church was thoroughly discussed and very plainly put before the church and all appealed to come forward and to their full duty and let us free the church from debt." The discussion no doubt reflected some understandable dissatisfaction on the pastor's part with not being paid.

During the 1890s, the decade now dawning, American taste in popular music was beginning to shift. Some of the new hits would be the traditional sentimental type: "Annie Laurie," "My Wild Irish Rose," "On the Banks of the Wabash Far Away." But there was a new pert sauciness in some music, which was now for the first time often available in the form of phonograph records: "Sidewalks of New York," "Daisy Bell (Bicycle Built for Two)," "The Band Played On," and lots of the popular new ragtime numbers. It would be interesting to know what the members of Wilson Baptist Church thought of this, especially the august members of the Reference Committee.

On February 13, the three new deacons were ordained to office, with Henry W. Battle of New Bern preaching the ordination sermon. There was an especially large turnout, not only for the ordination itself but also to hear Mr. Battle once again. He is said to have preached "with great power," even though he had a severe headache at the time. In March ten members were dropped from the rolls, presumably because they were inactive or had moved away. Once again the matter of not paying the pastor came up. When a special appeal was made, about \$72 was collected from the fifty-one members present. On Sunday, March 9, Pastor Read announced his resignation, to take effect April 1. At a business meeting a few days later he spoke kindly and warmly of his affection for Wilson Baptist Church. The *Wilson Mirror* published a long complimentary editorial in the March 12 issue.

The Reads moved from Wilson to a Baptist church in Charles Town, West

^{6.} The sermon was written up in the Wilson Mirror of February 19, 1890.

Virginia. This is not Charleston, as mistakenly recorded in the church book. It is a different place in the far eastern part of the state, near Harpers Ferry. Mr. Read was pastor there until 1893.⁷ At that point I lose track of him. It is possible he went into medicine. There was a Dr. Miles S. Read who was professor of mental disease at the Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine in 1901, but it may not be the same person.

It did not take long for the church to decide whom to call as the next pastor. We wanted Henry W. Battle, the pastor from New Bern who had preached here recently. We voted on March 25 to call him, by a unanimous standing vote. We would offer him a thousand dollars and a parsonage. Battle was notified of his selection by wire, but he replied that he could not accept before the fall, if then. This was no doubt because his wife was then pregnant with a child to be born in July. We agreed to wait and to hire someone for the summer, hoping that Mr. Battle would eventually agree to come to Wilson. On April 6 Brother Durham preached for us,⁸ and on April 27 J. M. Millard, whom the *Wilson Mirror* of April 30 describes as "a boy preacher" from Wake Forest College, filled our pulpit and made a good impression. One person who heard him said, "I'm going to 'call him' whether the Baptists do or not." On May 6 we offered an invitation to young Millard to help us through the summer. Millard turned us down, but on that date we made the decision to move prayer meeting from Tuesday nights to Wednesday nights.

Our summer supply pastor, who would stay with us through September, was a student from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, John Marion Thomas. He was unmarried at the time. He must have made a good impression. When he left in September, the *Wilson Mirror* published a highly commendatory editorial about his brief time with us. After graduating from Southern, Thomas would go on to serve churches in Pennsylvania and Virginia, but spent most of his career in his home state of Alabama.

Henry Wilson Battle, his wife Margaret (Maggie), and their three-monthold son John Stewart arrived in October. Pastor Battle makes his first appearance in our record books as our pastor at a called business meeting Sunday night, October 5, but we know from the *Wilson Mirror* of October 8 that he preached his first sermon as pastor, and conducted communion, that Sunday morning. The editor of the *Mirror* wrote exceptionally florid prose, but he outdid himself in a long column of elaborate praise for Battle's first sermon in

^{7.} Brumback, Charles Town Baptist Church, 14.

^{8.} Wilson Mirror, April 9, 1890.

^{9.} Wilson Mirror, September 17, 1890.

^{10.} Ramond, Among Southern Baptists, 495.

^{11.} The *Wilson Mirror* of September 17 records that he preached on Wednesday, September 10, before assuming the office of pastor.



Henry Battle (Love, *Southern Baptist Pulpit*)

Wilson. He specifically mentions the preacher's "very tender and affectionate allusion to the other denominations" in connection with the communion service. It would be interesting to know if these words were explaining Baptist closed communion, or if he were inviting all Christians to an open communion. Many visitors from other churches would have been there for the new preacher's first sermon as pastor.

Henry Battle was a cousin of the Battle sisters whom we met in chapter 6. He was born in Tuskegee, Alabama, on July 19, 1857, son of Confederate general Cullen A. Battle. He attended Mercer University and practiced law for four years in Tuskegee before feeling a call to the ministry. While at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, he stud-

ied under Professors Boyce and Broadus, as well as W. H. Whitsitt and C. H. Toy, both of whom were later forced from the school due to conflict with theological conservatives in the convention, even while defended by such influential figures as our own former pastor W. Carter Lindsay. His first church was at Columbus, Mississippi. During his four years there the church was once host to the Southern Baptist Convention, quite an honor for a young pastor. He came down with malaria, however, and left Mississippi for what he hoped would be a more healthful climate, and to work with smaller congregations that might be less taxing on his health. He briefly served First Baptist in Bennettsville, South Carolina, then came to Wadesboro in North Carolina. There his wife distinguished herself by organizing the local women into that church's Woman's Missionary Society. Many of the men of the church bitterly objected to that group and would not let their wives join. When the Battles left for New Bern, the WMU was inactive for seven years. But the Wadesboro church appreciated their pastor. The only fault they could find with him was that he spent too much time fishing. 12 From Wadesboro he went to New Bern, and that was where we found him.

Battle found in Wilson a church ready to expand. By the end of the year \$5,371.50 had been pledged toward the construction of a new house of worship. We had a Poor Fund, which was put at the pastor's disposal to use as he

saw fit. The pastor thought it inappropriate, however, for him to also serve as treasurer of the Building Fund. In April Mr. Battle himself preached a protracted meeting of a week and a half. The *Wilson Mirror*, in its issue of April 15, lavished praise on Battle as "the sceptered Monarch in the dynasty of Oratory and Eloquence." Apparently those who made professions of faith during the revival were offered the invitation to join at the worship service of Sunday, April 26. Four men came forward. Mr. Battle was in demand as a revival speaker. He held meetings in Scotland Neck and in Warrenton while our pastor, with the full permission and encouragement of our congregation. The *Wilson Mirror* often quoted long excerpts from other papers, and in its February 4 issue of 1891, a long column featured excerpts from editorials in two Warrenton papers about the forcefulness and beauty of Mr. Battle's preaching. In May 1891 our pastor traveled to Birmingham for the Southern Baptist Convention, where he preached a sermon that was well received. It was at this convention that the Baptist Sunday School Board was created.

In September there was a meeting to discuss progress on the new church. The stated intent of the trustees was to sell the parsonage lot, reserving some sixty-five feet on Nash. They were expecting a load of brick to be delivered in the next two weeks. The sale was effected a few days later and was reported in the *Wilson Mirror* in its September 30 issue. Apparently this deprived the Battle family of the parsonage, so arrangements were made for him to be paid an extra \$16.33 per month for boarding elsewhere.

Postal services had evidently developed to the point that a person could come for membership and expect that the church would write the person's former church for the letter and the former church would forward it. The minutes from around this time record letters from churches being read, asking for a letter dismissing a certain person. It had apparently become the custom to offer a routine invitation at the end of the Sunday service. This implies that mail could be addressed to Wilson Baptist Church, perhaps for the pastor or a deacon to pick up from the post office.

Sunday, January 17, 1892, Battle preached an especially moving sermon on Isaiah 64:6, "We all do fade as a leaf." It was occasioned by the recent deaths of two notable men: Robert Ransom, a North Carolinian known (better then than now) for his Civil War career, and Cardinal Manning, a Catholic churchman "whose majestic powers and high christian character gave such a glory light to the world." It is interesting that a Baptist in Wilson would honor a Catholic cardinal in a sermon. This was written up in the *Wilson Mirror*'s

^{13.} Wilson Mirror of May 6 reports a write-up in the Baltimore Baptist. The Mirror of May 27 gave Battle space on the front page for a long account of the convention. That was unusual. The front page was usually not given over to news of interest. That was on page 5.

edition on Wednesday, January 20. Something else happened that Wednesday way up in Springfield, Massachusetts, that would eventually provide our membership with lots to talk about, particularly the men's Sunday School classes: the world's first game of basketball was played at the YMCA there. On February 24, Mr. Battle was away in Durham, and our pulpit was filled by none other than Needham Bryan Cobb, now fifty-six years old.

In early March Henry Battle offered his resignation. It is not clear exactly when this happened. The church book gives the date as Sunday, March 6, 1892, but the *Wilson Mirror* reported it in its issue of Wednesday, March 2. (Newspapers did occasionally put a wrong date on the masthead.) He apparently gave notice that his resignation would be effective April 1. He moderated a business meeting on March 9 in which some routine nominations were made, but some new items of interest appear in the minutes. This appears to be the first election of Sunday School officers. B. F. Briggs was elected superintendent and L. R. Jordan assistant superintendent. Mattie Taylor was elected treasurer and Maggie Dixon organist. Also, Mrs. Hattie Privette was elected librarian and Ed Cobb assistant librarian. It is not at all clear what the Sunday School librarian did, let alone an assistant, but we must have had a small collection of books somewhere on the premises, or perhaps it had to do with procuring and distributing lesson materials.

Matters regarding Mr. Battle's resignation and departure become confusing with an entry dated April 17, 1892, which was a Sunday. Actually, there are two entries for that date. The second does not mention Mr. Battle; it simply states that a couple of members were granted letters of dismission. But the first entry contains a list of names of thirty-six people who made professions of faith "after a series of meetings for about one week" and were baptized by the pastor, H. W. Battle. There are also twenty-three names of people coming on promise of letter, and one "restored" to membership. The date of this session may be wrong. The "series of meetings" refers to some preaching done at Planters Warehouse¹⁴ by a hellfire-and-brimstone traveling evangelist named William P. "Bill" Fife. It went on for some time, and the *Mirror* reported on March 30 that so far 150 "backsliders" had been reclaimed by the "drummer evangelist." ("Drummer" was a common term for a traveling salesman and was not necessarily derogatory.)¹⁵ There had been some excitement during a Friday night service when a coal oil lamp fell and broke, causing a

^{14.} The warehouses referred to in this book are tobacco warehouses, large open indoor spaces where piles of cured tobacco were arrayed on the floor for auctioning. When tobacco was not coming in, the warehouses could be rented out for other uses.

^{15.} Traveling salesmen, who provided a useful service to local merchants in rail-road towns, increased greatly in number during this period. Census figures, probably conservative, record 7,300 in 1870, 28,000 in 1880, 59,000 in 1890, and 93,000 by 1900. See Hollander, "Nineteenth Century Anti-Drummer Legislation," 482.

fire. There was some confusion and the threat of a dangerous panic before the flames were put out and cool heads restored order. The large number of people presenting themselves for membership at Wilson Baptist and being baptized by Henry Battle are surely some of the converts or backsliders from the Fife meeting. It created quite a stir in Wilson, and several churches gained members. This was a time when traveling evangelists were becoming numerous and popular. Billy Sunday was just beginning his career. Sam Jones was another figure on the sawdust trail in the Southeast at the time, so popular that he lent his likeness and recommendation to a patent medicine that advertised in the Biblical Recorder. The New York Times reported on November 25, 1895, that a certain drummer evangelist in North Carolina made a specialty of converting saloon owners. It writes, "The methods of the modern revivalist are indeed so nearly those of the commercial traveler that it is no wonder that an evangelist who has had actual experience in drumming should be highly successful."16 The Biblical Recorder published letters back and forth. One argued that Fife's sermons were "scriptural, evangelical, and faithful," while Columbus Durham, a denominational officer, described "Sam Jones and Bill Fife and all that class of evangelists" as "religious tramps ... doing more harm than good." The Fife meeting in Wilson was certainly successful, but if Mr. Battle baptized these people, it must have been before the April 17 date given in the record book, since the Mirror of April 13 says that his temporary successor was already in town and that he had preached his first sermon Sunday, April 10. But Battle may have stayed a bit longer to be around when the new man came. That there are two separate entries for April 17 seems to indicate an error somewhere.

Henry W. Battle may not have left under the best of circumstances. There were some money problems. If we read the records for August 10, 1892, literally, the Battles may have left town owing money to local merchants. This sometimes happened. The relevant sentence is: "The indebtedness of Brother Battle *again* [emphasis added] called to the attention of the church." Perhaps

^{16.} The *NYT* is in fact referring to Fife. An article in the *Biblical Recorder* for December 25, 1895, is exceedingly skeptical of Fife's claims. In referring to the Baltimore publication from which the *NYT* also got its information, it says: "The *Evangel* is not in hearing distance of the truth. If all its reports of professional evangelists are only half as inflated as these, they are outrageous misrepresentations." The *Evangel* reported in the same article nine hundred recent conversions in Wilson. Unlike the meeting in 1892, the 1895 meeting had no effect on our church that can be detected in the church records.

^{17.} Issues of December 23 and April 29, 1891, quoted in Long, W. P. Fife, the Drummer Evangelist, 31. This book, by a great-grandson of Fife and his wife, is a carefully done, well-written, and useful short biography. At age forty-four Fife gave up the life of a drummer evangelist and became a success in several business ventures, dealing in western mining and oil operations.

it means "indebtedness to Bro. Battle." and we owed him money, in which case it may have had something to do with his leaving. The same records indicate that "Brother Briggs announced that the one hundred and fifty dollars needed had not been collected." It is not said what "the" \$150 was for. Maybe we owed Brother Battle that much. One thing was pretty clear by now: we were not generous in giving.

Perhaps Brother Briggs was referring to a benefit performance given Friday, July 8. It had been written up in the *Mirror* on Wednesday.

There will be an elegant entertainment in Mamona Hall on Friday night for the benefit of the Baptist Church. It will consist of music and recitations, and from the high talent of those who will take part in the exercises we know it will be one of the most enjoyable entertainments ever given to a Wilson audience. Miss Lucy Whitehead, the finest elocutionist in the South, and who is an unapproachable Venus in the dramatic sky of thrilling impressiveness, will shine forth that night with all the glory light of her gorgeous splendors, and flood the occasion with the unsurpassed brilliancy of her matchless beamings.¹⁸

It must be nice to get rave reviews like that ahead of the performance. I hope the evening justified the praise, but if we were expecting to gain \$150 from it, we were disappointed. There is nothing about this in the church records, and it sounds like something the ladies of the church may have come up with. Mamona Hall was a theater built on the second floor above a store at Barnes and Tarboro. Lucy's father, H. G. Whitehead, was one of its three founders. The father, mother, and Lucy had been members of our church at one time but had since joined the Methodists. That Lucy would be performing at a benefit for the Baptist church shows that there was a cordial relation between the Baptist and Methodist churches.

Mr. Battle left us to begin a pastorate in Petersburg, Virginia, which was to last seven productive years. During this time he became well-known as a pulpiteer and was chosen to give the Phillips Brooks lectures, a series of midday sermons for businessmen in Boston. While holding a meeting in Richmond, he developed a bad throat condition, and doctors told him he would really have to give up preaching. But after a few months of complete rest, he thought he might be able to resume his work in a better climate. So he came back to Greensboro as pastor of First Baptist. He served briefly in Kinston before returning to Virginia, to High Street Baptist Church of Charlottesville. This was his longest and most successful pastorate. He gave

^{18.} Wilson Mirror, July 6, 1892.

^{19.} Valentine, Rise of a Southern Town, 70.

lectures and preached revivals in some of the leading pulpits of both North and South. A few of his sermons were published. One, "Constraining Love," on 2 Corinthians 5:14, was preached during the Jubilee Session of the Southern Baptist Convention in Washington, DC, in 1895. ²⁰ Another, preached at First Baptist in Greensboro, was published separately. The subject matter, "An Indictment of the Cigarette Habit," gives an indication of Battle's nerve, bringing up such a subject in a North Carolina pulpit.

Battle's latter years were spent in excruciating pain. He passed away in Charlottesville in July 1946. Henry Alford Porter, his pastor there for sixteen years, wrote of him, "He had a towering rhetoric, attuned to his times, which was captivating and exhilarating. He knew the glory of words, and used them as banners. The intellectuals respected him, and the common people in his days of vigor heard him gladly." And elsewhere, "He was a pillar in the temple of our denomination. He was strong in his convictions. Here was a man who believed something. . . . He was not a perfect man. He had his faults and everyone knew them. He was never afraid to give himself away. Everything came out." People who first read that may have known what those faults were, but we are missing something about the man by not knowing now. Reading between the lines of what is written of him, I rather get the impression that especially in his later years he could be, well, perhaps a bit stubborn.

The Battles had several children. John S., the infant they brought with them to Wilson, became a lawyer. After service in the army during World War I, he entered politics, and from 1950 to 1954 he served as governor of Virginia. He gained attention at the Democratic National Convention in 1952 by refusing to take a loyalty oath that had been passed by the convention at the height of the McCarthy unrest over alleged Communists in government. At the convention in 1956 he was nominated as a candidate for president, but he lost out to Adlai Stevenson. He was known as a moderate during the civil rights struggles of the 1950s and 1960s. President Eisenhower appointed him to the first U.S. Commission on Civil Rights. He died in 1972 and is buried in Charlottesville. 23

^{20.} Love, Southern Baptist Pulpit, 133–139.

^{21.} RH, July 11, 1946.

^{22.} Virginia Baptist Annual, 1946, 189–190.

^{23.} National Governors' Association Web site, www.nga.org; University of Virginia, www.vcdh.virginia.edu.

Chapter 12

The Progressive Era

1890-1920 (John E. White, 1892-1893)

From morning to evening conditions change, and all things move swiftly before the Lord.

-SIRACH 18:26 RSV

White came to Wilson Baptist Church on Sunday, April 10, 1892, to fill in until October, he was newly ordained. A native of nearby Clayton, he was born into a Baptist pastor's family on December 19, 1868. He graduated from Wake Forest College, intending to become a lawyer. While teaching at Mars Hill College in 1891 he felt a call to the ministry and was ordained early the next year. Soon he came to Wilson to replace Henry Battle until a new pastor was chosen.

The new pastor was none other than John E. White himself. We liked him enough that we thought we'd make him an offer of a \$750 salary plus parsonage, to take effect July 1. He accepted. His preaching certainly gained the approval of the *Wilson Mirror*, which praised his sermons highly in two successive issues of the paper that April. Although the church records say nothing about it, in October we gave him a couple of weeks off to get married. He went to Cary to marry a young lady named Effie Guess. The editor of the *Mirror* could not resist some bad punning: Effie was described as "a young

^{1.} This temporary offer is reported in *Wilson Mirror*, April 13, 1892, not the church record book, but it is consistent with the records.

lady of great worth and excellence and loveliness. With such virtues we gues[s] his union will prove effie-cacious to his peace and happiness." He returned on Saturday, October 22.²

Some fund-raising went on. Saturday afternoon of July 15 we held a benefit ice cream festival on the courthouse green for the children.³

Mr. White did not stay with us long; he left sometime between May and October 1893 under strange and possibly strained circumstances. On May 10 he reminded the church that they were behind \$140 in paying his salary. A week later he was on hand to receive into membership and baptize his young wife. At this point there is a note in the



John E. White (Edenton Baptist Church)

book: "This pastor's salary was paid in full as is fully shown by account on the Treasurer's book and receipt of Brother White on file." Clearly someone thought a point needed to be made of this. Also at this point a sheet has been cut from the church book, consisting of pages 267–268.

What was excised from the book was the story of the misadventures of two of the Blount daughters, Gertrude (nineteen) and Sue (sixteen), and their friend Mattie Harrison (nineteen). These young ladies boarded a train and went to a public dance in Elm City, and without a chaperone! For this they were removed from the rolls. The Reference Committee at the time consisted of seven men, including the august George W. Blount, father of two of the accused, and W. W. Simms, husband of another Blount daughter, Pauline. There must have been considerable strife over this. Mrs. Blount took her daughters and went huffing off to Hickory, where her oldest child, Mary, lived. All this was in May. Mrs. Blount had no intention of returning until this matter was cleared up to her indignant satisfaction. Apparently it was. The Advance (September 28, 1893) reported that "Mr. Geo. Blount and family returned from Hickory" on Friday, September 22. The *Mirror* (October 4) coyly put it this way: "Mrs. G. W. Blount and her daughters Misses Gertrude and Sue have returned after quite a stay in the western part of the state." It is at this point that the next page of the church record begins in midsentence: ... conference to be held to consider further the call of Pastor. In the mean-

^{2.} Wilson Mirror, October 12 and 26, 1892.

^{3.} Wilson Advance, July 13, 1893.



Mattie Harrison Moss (left) and Sue Blount Pettus decades after their escapade, celebrating many years of Sunday School teaching; Howell C. Moss, center (FBC)

time the deacons to continue their investigations." The young ladies were restored, and the Blounts had their way.

If it seems strange that the girls would have been attracted to a dance in Elm City, remember that at the time Elm City was not that much smaller than Wilson. Wilson had 2,126 inhabitants in 1890, to Elm City's 482. But in September 1890, something happened that was going to propel Wilson's growth for many decades: the first tobacco was sold on the Wilson market.

Pastor John E. White was bound to have been deeply involved in this little spat between the righteous in the congregation and the embarrassing behavior of two teenagers of its most prominent family, but it's hard to tell just how. No more is said about Brother White, although on October 25 his wife Effie was granted a letter of dismission. There is no record that John ever actually joined the church.

There is some reason to think that Brother White himself had just as soon forget this short pastorate, although from time to time he was invited back

4. Sue Blount (Mrs. T. F. Pettus) laughingly told the story to A. J. Hayes, who recorded it in the Memory Booklet of 1995. I have verified it from other sources.

here to preach. In various articles here and there giving details of his life and career, Wilson is seldom mentioned. In fact, his pastorate here seems never to be mentioned in sources in which the information would have been provided by White himself. His pastorates are said to have begun with Edenton, where he went upon leaving us. One of the few records I can find that mentions his first pastorate as being in Wilson is a long obituary in Virginia's *Religious Herald* of August 13, 1931, where it is said that "he won his way to the hearts not only of his flock, but of all the people." The writer, Josiah William Bailey,⁵ even recalls that White, who had been a college athlete, played baseball on Wilson's town ball team.⁶ He never gave up his interest or participation in sports. He became a golfer after John D. Rockefeller introduced him to the game sometime in the early 1900s.⁷

Iohn E. White was a gifted man who was to become one of the most widely known and respected figures in the SBC and, for that matter, in the South generally. He was a keen participant in Baptist politics, and a sharp observer of national politics as well. Of all our pastors, he is the only one that merits an entry in the Southern Baptist Encyclopedia (one of those sources that does not mention Wilson). He served the church at Edenton until 1896, when he became a vigorous secretary of missions for the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina. He left for Georgia in 1901 and became pastor of Atlanta's Second Baptist Church. In 1916 he accepted the double post of president of Anderson College in South Carolina and pastor of Anderson's First Baptist Church. After a successful administration there, he took on the pastorate of the historic First Baptist Church of Savannah in 1927, a position he held until his death on July 21, 1931. He is buried in Anderson. He had held many denominational offices. The Baptist Collection at Wake Forest University has an extensive file of encomiums delivered and published upon White's death. He is said to have been a powerful preacher, with "a stately, exquisite quality to his messages."8 He never wrote out his sermons; rather, he prepared

- 5. Bailey had been editor of the *Biblical Recorder* from 1893 to 1907, during which time he came to know White well. At the time of White's death Bailey was in his first year as senator from North Carolina. He referred to White as "my best friend and the noblest soul I have known."
- 6. From the August 24, 1886, issue of the *Weekly Brief* in the possession of Bob and Sally Boswell, we learn that in 1886 Wilson had two ball teams, First and Second. The paper refers twice to the First as the "Lightweights." Maybe Pastor White played on one of these.
- 7. Greensboro Daily News, July 22, 1931. This was reported in several newspapers.
- 8. Diary entry for August 16, 1919, Samuel Lewis Morgan Papers, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, UNC—Chapel Hill. It is interesting that S. L. Morgan was chosen to write the article on White for the Southern Baptist Encyclopedia. Morgan, who lived to be 101, was an enthusiastic supporter and practitioner

them, then delivered them ad lib. Although he was writing constantly, he never wrote a book. However, an admirer of his on the faculty at Anderson College, Annie Dove Denmark, often did her best to write down his sermons in longhand. When White left the college, Miss Denmark became president, and the year after White's death she published some of his sermons as she remembered them, under the title *White Echoes*.

White's brief pastorate here gives us a chance to pause and see just where we are at this point. White was one of the most influential southern voices during the period that historians often call the Progressive era in American history, generally the three decades from 1890 to 1920. John E. White was active in several of the movements that caused profound changes in American life during these years. He was a member of the Southern Sociological Congress, an organization founded in 1912 to implement social changes, such as better race relations, public health, and public education; improving conditions for orphans, prisoners, and the mentally ill; and abolishing child labor. He was a frequent contributor to the South Atlantic Quarterly, a journal devoted to reform issues. Much of what he wrote, especially on race relations, makes us cringe today, but in his time it passed for liberal thinking. On the American scene as a whole, what we now call the Social Gospel movement was growing during the Progressive era, and while Southern Baptists as a whole steered clear of theological liberalism, quite a few "proved surprisingly receptive to social Christianity."10

The place of the free African American in North Carolina, as well as the South in general, pretty well reached its lowest point in the late 1890s. Ever since the Civil War, the Democratic Party in the South had been struggling to enforce white supremacy and exploit the fear of "Negro rule" left over from Reconstruction. The presidential and gubernatorial elections in 1876 were crucial for the years ahead. In the hotly contested national election, the Democrats, who by most accounts had won, agreed not to continue the fight if the Republicans would agree to two things: Rutherford B. Hayes would not run for a second term, and federal forces would be removed from areas in the South where they still remained, thus giving southern Democrats free rein to establish permanent white supremacy. In the gubernatorial election,

of the Social Gospel movement among North Carolina Baptists. The editors must have known the two were kindred spirits. Morgan deserves more attention and study. His papers in the SHC are extensive, including a diary he kept for years. The only secondary source I can find on him is an entry in the WFU collection by Walter West. It is only twenty-seven pages and appears to be a student term paper, though a good one. We will meet Morgan later in our story as an influence on one of our most prominent lay leaders, James I. Miller.

^{9.} See Eighmy, "Religious Liberalism in the South during the Progressive Era." 10. Eighmy, "Religious Liberalism in the South during the Progressive Era," 369.

Democrat Zebulon Vance led a campaign to elevate the sterling virtues of the Old South and the bravery of the Confederate forces. Republican Thomas Settle spoke for the many North Carolinians who blamed the secessionists for the devastation of the war in the first place. Vance won, and in the 1880s a mythologized version of southern history began to develop; Robert E. Lee came to be almost deified. It was during this period, 1890–1920, that most monuments to the Confederate dead were erected.

In 1896 the Supreme Court handed down the *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision. validating racial segregation in public facilities under the "separate but equal" doctrine. From 1894 to 1897 a "Fusion" state government of Republicans and Populists enacted laws that made it easier for blacks as well as illiterate whites to vote. The Democrats then effectively resorted to terrorism. From 1898 to 1900 gangs of armed whites known as the Red Shirts thoroughly intimidated the black population and anti-Democratic whites to help promote the complete disfranchisement of Negroes. This was accomplished by an amendment to the state constitution approved in 1900. To circumvent the Fifteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, a poll tax was levied, which few black citizens were able to pay, and a literacy test imposed, which few could pass. To allow illiterate whites to vote, a "grandfather" clause exempted from the literacy test any man who was a descendant of someone registered to vote in 1867, before Reconstruction.11 A swift change had come about. As late as October 2, 1895, the *Biblical Recorder*, which in those days didn't shy away from political issues, had published on its front page an editorial chastising the South Carolina legislature for depriving the black population of "the precious right to vote." Five years later the political climate in the Old North State was quite different, and John E. White himself was willing to support the amendment, for reasons we will see a bit later.

From this point there was nowhere to go but up, and it is against this bleak background that we must judge the white and black leaders of the time. Measures that strike us as timid were then close to courageous. Like most whites of the time, however generous, John Ellington White believed that the white race simply was inherently superior to the black race. That is right there on the pages of writings such as "The True and the False in Southern Life," "The Need of a Southern Program on the Negro Problem," and "Thinking White down South." But his thought matured after the notorious North Carolina vote of 1900. White was then in Atlanta, and after a vicious race riot there in 1906 he led in efforts to heal wounds in the community. He

^{11.} Crow, "Thomas Settle Jr."; James L. Hunt, "Disfranchisement" and "Red Shirts" in Powell, *Encyclopedia of North Carolina*.

^{12.} *South Atlantic Quarterly* 5, no. 2 (April 1906): 97–113, and 6, no. 2 (April 1907): 177–188; *Southern Workman* 14 (January 1916): 57–62.

was already known as a figure who tried to bring black and white Baptist conventions closer together. J. A. Whitted, in a 1908 *History of the Negro Baptists of North Carolina*, remembers White from his days in this state: "Dr. White never lost an opportunity to help the colored people, and especially the colored Baptists of North Carolina, and he as no other man always made a profound impression on our conventions." He helped form a coalition of college presidents to study race relations. He was convinced that a preoccupation with the "Negro problem" hindered the entire South, white as well as black, from progress. He encouraged efforts at education among Negroes and was frequently called on to address meetings such as the National Negro Business League. He was a correspondent with Booker T. Washington, whose views were as cautious as White's were paternalistic.¹⁴

During his service in North Carolina as secretary of missions for the Baptist State Convention, White campaigned for increased attention to the undereducated people of the mountain areas. He wrote of a "mountain problem" just as he did a "Negro problem," and saw education as the solution to both. He and his close friend Josiah William Bailey, then editor of the Biblical Recorder but later U.S. senator from North Carolina, supported public education of the state's children but were opposed to tax revenues being used to support the university. They felt that it took money away from the public school systems and gave unfair competition to denominational colleges. It was mentioned above that Dr. White supported the 1900 amendment to disfranchise the Negroes of the state. This was part of a secret deal made by White and Bailey with two influential sponsors of the amendment. If White and Bailey (and the Biblical Recorder) would throw their influence behind the white supremacy movement, the others would see that "the Legislature to be chosen would make no increases in the appropriations for the University or other State institutions of learning."15 It's not a pretty story, but that's what happened.

White became involved in higher education personally. Probably the high point of his life was his presidency of Anderson College in South Carolina. While he was there, his alma mater, Wake Forest College, went through a period of great stress over the teaching of Darwinian evolution by Professor William L. Poteat, who was also president. The controversy spilled over into the Southern Baptist Convention itself. Whether or not Dr. White believed in evolution—I don't know that he did or didn't—he was a sturdy champion

^{13.} Whitted, History, 43-44.

^{14.} Daniels, *Tar Heel Editor*, 318–324; Harlan, *Booker T. Washington*, 255–256; Warnock, *Moderate Racial Thought*, 65–68.

^{15.} Daniels, *Tar Heel Editor*, 319; Bode, *Protestantism and the New South*, 127–139.

of Poteat's freedom to teach it, and a stalwart opponent of the fundamentalist tide then rising in the convention. R. T. Vann, the armless president of Meredith College whom we met in chapter 8, was another spokesman for the more liberal side.¹⁶

White was certainly in touch with theological movements beyond the Southern Baptist or even the American sphere. On April 24, 1929, he wrote his old friend Bailey that he was sending him a book "by Barth. The new voice of Protestant Europe. You will enjoy it, I am sure." This would have been Karl Barth's *Word of God and Word of Man*. Probably in 1929 very few Baptist theological students would ever even have heard of Barth, the Swiss theologian who turned out to be one of the twentieth century's foremost religious thinkers.

In the early 1920s an effort, eventually successful, was made to adopt a Statement of Faith and Message for the Southern Baptist Convention. White thought this was a move in a very wrong direction and was one of the leaders speaking out against it. He wrote, "Let us not be deluded into thinking that the Southern Baptist Convention can integrate Southern Baptist thought by fiat of creedal declarations." And again, "If it adopts and promulgates a formal, written, official Convention creed, let it be understood that it is a realized departure from the former and long-established conception of its functions and of its traditional attitude toward creedal authority. Let it be understood that it now proposes a new conception of Baptist ecclesiasticism."18 Feelings ran high. White's close friend Josiah Bailey, now a Raleigh lawyer, wrote to White about L. R. Scarborough, a professor at Southwestern Seminary in Fort Worth and one of the proponents of the Statement of Faith and Message, referring to him as "the Texas Jackass." White spoke prophetically when he feared a new kind of "Baptist ecclesiasticism." This movement would bear bitter fruit after 1979.20

- 16. Cabney, *Liberalism in the South*, 301; Furniss, *The Fundamentalist Controversy*, 119.
- 17. White to Dear William, Josiah William Bailey Papers, Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library, Duke University. Bailey was always known as "William" or "Willie" until he married. His wife thought "Josiah" was more dignified. Boxes 16–17 of the Bailey Papers contain a good many letters between these two old friends. Many of White's letters are revelatory of his thinking on Baptist doings as well as state and national politics.
 - 18. Baptist Standard, April 30, 1925; RH, March 5, 1926.
 - 19. Bailey to My Dear John, February 26, 1926. Bailey Papers.
- 20. He spoke presciently on another matter when he wrote Bailey on January 12, 1927, about the vacancy in the presidency of Wake Forest College. There was a big debate as to whether the next president had to be a Baptist preacher. White, at the time president of Anderson College, a Baptist institution in South Carolina, wrote: "If Wake Forest had three millions more in endowment, my type of man would not

The prohibition movement that culminated in the Eighteenth Amendment to the Constitution was an essential part of the Progressive era, and it is not surprising that John E. White was active in the prohibition cause. Reformers saw the liquor traffic as a social evil that should be corrected. Although some Baptists opposed prohibition legislation, reasoning that the arguments for it were essentially religious and therefore the state should have nothing to do with it, most Baptists by around 1900 or so were devoted to the cause. It had not always been so, especially in the South, and like so much else in southern culture, there were racial roots.

In the early years of American history, from the colonial period right up through the Civil War, Americans really put the stuff away. We were a heavydrinking people, and that included Baptists as well as beer-guzzling Germans, wine-bibbing Italians, and whiskey-drinking Irish. People thought no more about giving beer or hard cider to their kids than we would think about giving them iced tea. Drunkenness, or "intemperance" as it was often delicately put, was frowned on and preached against, but not the consumption of alcohol as such. The Episcopal bishop of North Carolina, Joseph Blount Cheshire (once a student of our early pastor Thomas R. Owen), wrote in 1930: "It must be remembered that the best and most entirely honorable and upright men of a hundred years ago drank intoxicating liquors habitually, and that an occasional excess did not imply any such weakness or depravity, as it has come to mean with us."21 William Hooper, in his 1859 address at UNC, "Fifty Years Hence," (chapter 5) went leaping over a hundred years and suggested that North Carolina farmers seriously begin cultivating grapes for wine, and that light wine and beer be made available to college students, to steer them clear of the bad stuff.22 Jeremiah Bell Jeter, a leading Virginia Baptist who lived from 1802 to 1880, could write in 1891: "Almost all ministers, of all denominations, and indeed all Christians, as well as people of the world, used [strong drink] constantly and under no strict restraint."23 In a chapter comparing the old-time preachers of his youth to those of his elder years, he wrote, "There was more asceticism in the piety of former times, as there is frivolity in that of the present day. With all their austerity, the fathers would drink whiskey, and never suspected that the indulgence was wrong or dangerous. . . . In former times drunkenness would have been more readily

be for a moment considered.... The trustees would snap their fingers at the Baptist democracy and go ahead regardless."

^{21.} Cheshire, *Nonnulla*, 202. The Episcopal Diocese of North Carolina officially endorsed prohibition in 1908. See Whitener, *Prohibition in North Carolina*, 158.

^{22.} Pages 606–608 in the online edition available at http://docsouth.unc.edu/true/hooper/hooper.html.

^{23.} Jeter, Reminiscences, 94.

excused than the playing of such a game as croquet."²⁴ It's hard to imagine a time when Baptist preachers would have considered playing croquet more sinful than sipping whiskey. Jeter may have been exaggerating a bit, but there you have it: Jeter thought that the old-time Baptists should be judged by the standards of their own day, not the more temperate views of a later time.²⁵ We should remember that as we judge John E. White, Booker T. Washington, and their contemporaries. An excellent survey of attitudes toward alcohol among early Americans, especially Baptists, and the evolution of those attitudes is available in a recent doctoral dissertation by Christopher Lynn Austin, available online at www.lib.ncsu.edu/theses/available/etd-06292005-083203/unrestricted/etd.pdf.²⁶

With drinking so widespread, it was inevitable that there would be social repercussions, and there were. What we call alcoholism was a serious problem, though the first appearance of that word in English was in 1860. The reason the cause against intemperance was muted in the South was because it was identified as a liberal cause, and everyone knew what the liberals really wanted to do: they wanted to free the slaves. To an extent that was right. The three causes taken up most heartily by liberal reformers in the early nineteenth century were temperance, votes for women, and abolition. Southerners tended be against all three, especially abolition, and someone who spoke out against liquor too strongly could be suspected of having abolitionist sentiments as well.²⁷ After slavery was abolished, temperance was freer to develop into prohibitionist sentiments, but once again there was a racial angle. An argument that lent considerable impetus to the cause in the South was that only through prohibition could alcohol be kept away from Negroes. Daniel Jay Whitener wrote: "People who before the War would have regarded prohibitory legislation as invading the field of their private rights now lent hearty cooperation for prohibition to keep liquor away from the Negro."28 John E. White himself is bluntly, even offensively emphatic on

^{24.} Jeter, *Reminiscences*, 310. See also Hilliard, *Hog Meat and Hoecake*, 52; Taylor, *Eating, Drinking, and Visiting in the South*, 43–46. The relation between temperance and abolitionism is made especially clear by Tyrrell, "Drink and Temperance in the Antebellum South."

^{25.} I own a cookbook put out in 1915 by the ladies of Union Avenue Baptist Church, my home church in Memphis. Some of the recipes call for spirits. They seemed to take for granted that brandy, at any rate, would be on hand. Always "good brandy," though.

^{26.} Austin, "Baptist Ministers' Habits, Attitudes, and Beliefs Concerning Alcohol Use," 25–58.

^{27.} See Tyrrell, "Drink and Temperance in the Antebellum South."

^{28.} Whitener, *Prohibition in North Carolina*, 57 and passim; Ownby, *Subduing Satan*, 172–173; Valentine, *Rise of a Southern Town*, 74.

this point in his article "Prohibition: The New Task and Opportunity of the South."²⁹

To some extent the prohibition movement was an expression of antiimmigrant feeling. Many people resented the influx of people from abroad and felt that by imposing prohibition, they could put down those beerdrinking Germans, wine-drinking Italians, and whiskey-drinking Irish, all of them Catholics.

The first state to institute prohibition was Maine, where it did not last long. The first attempt in North Carolina, in 1881, failed, but it passed in 1908. In 1919 the Eighteenth Amendment went into effect, only to be repealed by the Twentieth in 1933.

The efforts of the reformers in the temperance movement were not entirely unsuccessful. Prohibition had dire effects on the country by its fertilization of organized crime and by introducing women to serious drinking for the first time. Before prohibition, most heavy drinking was done in saloons and bars—men only. With prohibition came the speakeasy, where women were welcome. Also, men who drank would bring their liquor home with them, where women could get at it. But at the same time, prohibition did succeed in cutting down on the per capita alcohol consumption in the United States. Never since repeal has it approached the high levels of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

We have used John E. White's brief pastorate here as a way of revealing the kinds of things that were going on in these years. They affected us in Wilson as much as anyone else. As reactionary as some of White's writings sound today, and as reactionary as was his support of the disfranchising amendment, he was a child of the Progressive era, one of our denomination's most prominent exemplars of it, and was active in many areas of social reform. We have not even touched on his harsh denunciation of the chain gangs used in the Georgia prisons and the corruption of the whole convict system in the state.³⁰

During the Progressive era people were becoming aware of new translations of the Bible. In 1901 the American Standard Version was published to great fanfare. It was far closer to the original than the King James Version was, but it was wanting in English style and never became popular outside academic settings, although the Sunday School Board of the SBC began using the ASV text in some of its quarterly literature. In 1913 the so-called Baptist Bible appeared, the result of a long cooperation between northern and southern Baptists. Though it was a good translation, it remained something of an oddity because of its insistence on inserting in parentheses "(immerse)"

^{29.} South Atlantic Quarterly 7 (April 1908): 130-142.

^{30.} Skaggs, The Southern Oligarchy, 254-255.

each time the word "baptize" appeared.³¹ There were others. None came near challenging the stature of the King James Version in pulpit and private reading, but Christians were becoming aware that the Bible was not, after all, an English document—that when we read it we are reading a translation, of which there could be many. And many were to come.

Transportation was being revolutionized during the Progressive era. Macadamized roads, constructed essentially of fine gravel bound with tar or asphalt, were known as early as the Civil War, but there were few in North Carolina in 1890. Better roads were needed if for nothing more than transport of the mails, let alone goods to market. A network of plank roads, often private enterprises, had linked various portions of the state, but once automobiles made their appearance and became common, roads had to improve, and they did so more quickly as states as well as the federal government took on responsibility for constructing them. Patrick Valentine cannot identify the first person to own an automobile in Wilson but can tell us that the first auto repair shop opened in 1905, that the first speed limit for automobiles was enacted the next year, and that auto registration in the state doubled from 1913 to 1914.³²

Medical care was making advances during this period, and better roads had something to do with it, since doctors started buying cars early on for use in making house calls, and passable roads near your home meant the doctor could get there quicker. Telephones were coming into use, and that made the doctor's visit even faster. (Our church's telephone number was 421-L.) One of the first truly effective medicines in the doctor's black bag became available in 1899, when the Bayer company in Germany introduced aspirin. The greatest advances were made in the area of public health. People began to put screens on windows and doors to keep out flies and mosquitoes. Localities took on the responsibility for garbage disposal. Sewers and waterworks came into use, bringing with them indoor plumbing. Public health awareness affected churches as well. That is why individual communion cups came to be.

Attitudes toward church discipline would also change during this period. Ever since the beginnings of the congregation, Wilson Baptist had been removing members from its fellowship occasionally, for varied offenses. Our

^{31.} It was the first English Bible to translate the Hebrew of Isaiah 7:14 as "young woman" rather than "virgin," but there was no outcry about it, as there would be in 1952 when the RSV was published. See Bullard, "From Scotland to Philadelphia."

^{32.} Valentine, Rise of a Southern Town, 164–165.

^{33.} There was also quinine for malaria, digitalis for certain heart conditions, and opiates for pain. That was pretty much it. Most other "cures" used at the time did more harm than good.

church was no different from other Baptist churches—or churches of other denominations, for that matter, at least in the South. Two statistical studies, by Stephen M. Haines and by Ted Ownby, have been done of the practice during roughly the same time period.³⁴ Haines studied the records of fifteen Southern Baptist churches, while Ownby studied those of eighty-three Protestant churches, including thirty-seven Southern Baptist congregations. Both studies covered wide geographical areas. The two studies agree that the disfellowshipping of members reached a peak during the late 1800s and pretty well dwindled to near none in the early twentieth century.

Church discipline was, as we have observed, a quasi-legal proceeding. Certain protocols had to be followed. The New Testament contains passages that refer to such practices in the primitive church, but no specific rules are laid down. If discipline is to be exerted, however, rules must be followed, so manuals were written for the guidance of churches. Wilson Baptist has no record as to which might have been used, but most likely there was a copy of Patrick H. Mell's Corrective Church Discipline around. It spelled out precise procedures. Mell was known among Baptists of the time as the "prince of parliamentarians." The admitted purpose of discipline was not so much to punish as to correct erring members. Before such members could be corrected, they must be found out, accused, and tried. Members were encouraged to report misbehavior of other members to the church, in our case to the Reference Committee. The church or its Reference Committee would act as a kind of grand jury to bring charges, which were communicated, often in writing, to the "suspect." The accused could repent, either to the investigating committee or to the congregation in what amounted to open court. If the people accepted the statement of repentance (more than an apology), no action was taken, although the accused could not vote or participate in communion until the matter was settled. As a last resort, the erring member would be removed from the church rolls. The time taken to resolve cases could be an indication of whether the church was more intent on simply purifying itself or redeeming the sinner. In our own history these removals were occasionally peremptory. In other cases the matter might drag on for months.

By far the greatest number of expulsions from Baptist churches were simply for nonattendance or the joining of another denomination. Other charges of which someone might accuse a fellow church member were misuse of alcohol, dancing, sexual misconduct, profanity, failure to support the church financially, or the catchall accusation of "un-Christian conduct." There was an occasional disfellowshipping for fighting or for heresy, though these cases

^{34.} Haines, "Southern Baptist Church Discipline"; Ownby, *Subduing Satan*, 203–211. See also Floyd Patterson, "Discipline," in *Southern Baptist Encyclopedia*.

dropped off sharply by 1900. Establishment of police forces cut down on incidents of public fighting, and most church members were losing interest in pursuing fine points of theology that might lead to exclusion of a member.

Being excommunicated was a serious matter in the early years of our church. It did not have the same meaning among Baptists that it did for Catholics—that you were cut off from the grace of God and from the possibility of salvation—but you became an exile in your own community. If the church excluded you, everyone in town would know it. And if you were Baptist, it meant that you could not join another Baptist church, because the church that had removed you for your misconduct would not write a letter of dismission. It could not certify to the receiving church that you were a member in good standing.

A number of factors were at work in the general loss of concern with church discipline. In some cases civil law was operating to cut down on offenses that churches had policed. Public brawling was curbed, and as prohibition took hold in the South the number of incidents involving drunkenness dropped dramatically. The spirit of the times brought a sense of increased individualism, which was reflected in Baptist thought. E. Y. Mullins, one of the most important Southern Baptist theologians, exalted "soul competency" to the status of a "religious axiom." This was accompanied by a more optimistic view of human nature, and a reluctance of church members to report what they considered violations of Christian conduct to the church. The country's economy was growing, and there was a typically American emphasis on bigness as good, and lots of things were bigger, including churches. They were becoming large enough that not everyone in a congregation knew everyone else. Churches and pastors were under pressure to increase the membership and enrich the budget. As numbers for membership and attendance became more and more important in associational and convention reports, and pastors of large congregations were increasingly admired, there was less readiness to remove anyone, especially members who were good contributors. Southern Baptist Theological Seminary professor Gaines Dobbins, an influential figure, wrote a book titled The Efficient Church that introduced business models to church administration. In it he discouraged the old practice of church discipline, arguing that more problems are created than solved by listening to "tale-bearers." We must also acknowledge that the gradual secularization of American society as a whole eventually affected the way churches and pastors saw their own functions in the community. Procedures that once had seemed sanctified by Scripture were coming to be seen by Baptists as distastefully "legalistic, judicial, and punitive." 35

^{35.} The quotation as well as the references to Mullins and Dobbins are from Haines, "Southern Baptist Church Discipline," 25–26.

The 1890s saw the country enter a deep economic depression, which began in February with the bankruptcy of the Philadelphia & Reading Railroad. Bank runs soon developed, and the big political issue of the decade was the gold standard versus "free silver." Democrats argued that more people would have money if more money were out there. Republicans argued that a vote for free silver was a vote for prosperity for Latin America, China, and other countries. Populists (strong at the time) pushed for popular election of senators (originally senators were elected by state legislatures), an end to government subsidy of corporations, adoption of the Australian ballot (voting in secret on printed ballots rather than raising hands or declaring in public, the previous way of holding elections), and government ownership of railroads and communication systems. An overabundance of silver led to a spiral of deflation, which hit farmers particularly hard. Baptists in North Carolina shied away from the issue. J. D. Hufham denounced politicians who "scared the people" by saying that times were hard, though everyone knew they were. The Baptist State Convention in 1894 seemed to regret the depression mainly because giving to churches was going down. Crop prices were low, resulting in "the inability of some of our best people to give liberally." ³⁶

Southern Baptists would soon be on a course of phenomenal growth lasting well into the 1950s, spurred by a willingness of various strains of Baptist tradition to unite under a broad tent for purposes of mission work. The statement of Baptist Faith and Message (BFM) adopted at the 1925 convention, though opposed by many for making a step in an un-Baptist creedalist direction, was a fairly explicit statement of general principles on which all Baptists could agree, without being so dogmatically specific as to make participation in the SBC impossible for some. The BFM was based on the moderate New Hampshire Confession (adopted by our church in 1860 as our doctrinal guide). It constituted what Baptist historian Bill J. Leonard terms "the Great Compromise," which became both a strength and a weakness. The strength was its establishment of denominational programs and agencies as a source of solidarity; these programs were vigorously pushed and widely supported for the next quarter century. The Cooperative Program begun in 1925 provided an efficient engine for the missional and educational interests of the denomination. The weakness was that the statement was not doctrinally specific enough for the tastes of those who felt that their own views were correct and should be forced on everyone. This was especially true with reference to the statement on the Bible, which did not commit itself to any particular theory of interpretation. It was on this basis that J. Frank Norris (chapter 19) and A. C. Dixon (chapters 15 and 19), with their ties to northern fundamentalism, launched their attacks on the "modernism" of the SBC. Yet Baptists as conservative as T. T. Martin, a leader in the anti-evolutionist controversy (chapter 19), opposed these schismatic efforts out of loyalty to the structure of the SBC. These loyalties would begin to weaken from 1979 onward, when marginal fundamentalism began a determined campaign to stamp out the vast body of moderate practice in the convention, make the BFM statement more theologically specific in content and creedal in authority, and eventually assume control of the entire SBC (chapter 24).³⁷

But for now, around 1900, the various streams of Baptist tradition in the South, including the very old moderate traditions of eastern North Carolina (chapter 2), were united under the big tent of the Southern Baptist Convention and eager to promote its welfare. The older missionary Baptist churches of eastern North Carolina continued to preserve the old Charleston traditions of restraint and order in worship but were also comfortable with the other traditions present in the SBC. The Landmark controversy that so racked the SBC west of the mountains never touched FBC Wilson. Our church has always had, since the very beginning, a cordial, fraternal relation with the other downtown churches: First Methodist, First Presbyterian, First Christian, and St. Timothy's. We participated in union services, and our clergy often exchanged pulpits. In later years that circle would extend to the big African American churches as well. We always had a good working relationship with Atlantic Christian College. To the Landmarkers, this was heresy. These other groups were not churches at all, just societies with an interest in religion.

We followed Dr. William Hooper, our first real pastor, who saw all churches as expressions of the body of Christ.

Chapter 13

Dr. Mundy Comes to Town

1893-1895 (James A. Mundy)

They shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree.

-MICAH 4:4 KIV

A THE WEDNESDAY NIGHT MEETING, October 25, 1893, we voted to call as our pastor Dr. James A. Mundy, who had been serving First Baptist Church of Greenville, South Carolina, for the past ten years. A few people wanted to call Mr. McManaway back but decided to let the call be unanimous. "Mr. Mac" did return to Wilson to hold a revival meeting in November, however. He attracted large crowds at two services, one at three thirty in the afternoon, and another at night. Apparently there were no additions to the church.¹

It's hard for pastors to keep negotiations with other churches secret, and it wasn't long before the Baptists in Greenville were passing around the rumor that their pastor was about to leave them. An unusually large congregation attended the service at which it was known that he would read a letter of resignation. In the letter he described his accomplishments as pastor but said that after thought and prayer he had decided that his work in Greenville was done and that the church would make better progress under new leadership.

^{1.} Wilson Mirror, November 8, 1893.

His resignation would take effect November 26. He was highly regarded not just by First Baptist, but by all the citizens of Greenville, and they knew he would be missed.²

The Mundy family, his wife Nellie, and their adopted son (her nephew) arrived on Saturday, December 13, and he began preaching the next day. There was considerable excitement about this. We had had some able ministers, but none had ever come at the height of a widely famed career. He was the first pastor with a doctorate since the elderly William Hooper served us in our first years. So many people came to the church on Sunday the 14th that the house was full and many people had to be turned away at the door. The *Wilson Mirror*, commenting on this, said, "The Baptists must have a new church edifice." Part of Mundy's work among us would be to get that done.

James Alexander Mundy, son of a farmer, was born in Amherst County, Virginia, on March 5, 1836. As a youth, he was baptized into St. Stephen's Baptist Church in the little town of Amherst. He had a good education and graduated from Richmond College in 1859. Soon afterward he was ordained to the ministry by Mineral Springs Baptist Church in the community of Gladstone on the James River in Nelson County. He spent the ten years after ordination as pastor of various small churches in Nelson, Amherst, and Appomattox Counties. If he was in military service during the Civil War, nothing is said of it in the accounts of his life in the histories of the FBCs of Reidsville, North Carolina, and Roanoke, Virginia. From 1868 to 1870 he was principal of the Fluvanna Female Institute in Fork Union. Although he is said to have been a capable administrator, the school fell to financial difficulties. 4 Mundy went back into the pastorate with churches in Montgomery County, Blacksburg, and Christiansburg. Moving to the Roanoke area, he shepherded churches there a few years, including FBC of Roanoke from 1875 to 1877. From there he went to Warrenton, where he served seven years. Folks in Wilson probably came to know of him first when he was there. During his pastorate in Warrenton a good bit of remodeling work was done on the church building, most of it supervised by the pastor himself. His admirers remembered him this way: "He was a man of culture and marked ability. His sermons, always in manuscript, were scholarly, well arranged, and often eloquent and philo-

^{2.} Wilson Mirror, November 15, 1893, which printed an article from a paper in Greenville, SC.

^{3.} I am drawing mainly from *Adventure in Faith* (Roanoke), 47–48, and Richard Saunders, *Open Doors* (Reidsville), 282–283. There was a James A. Munday who served in the Thirty-ninth Virginia infantry. Our pastor's name was often misspelled.

^{4.} Halliburton, "Appointment with Nostalgia," 14.



James Alexander Mundy (An Adventure in Faith, a History of the First Baptist Church of Roanoke, Virginia, image courtesy of North Carolina Baptist Collection, Z. Smith Reynolds Library, Wake Forest University)

sophic. So forcibly and clearly were they delivered that they were easily understood and appreciated by all his hearers." Also: "He was a man of pleasing address and graceful figure, and had an attractive way of presenting, in a controversial spirit, his sermons and addresses."5 While he was at Warrenton, Wake Forest College gave him the DD degree. From Warrenton he went to his longest pastorate, in Greenville, where the quality of his preaching was quickly recognized. One who heard him at Citadel Square Baptist Church in Charleston during a meeting of the South Carolina State Convention in 1883 remarked: "Dr. Mundy is free from all sensational tricks and preaches with much force and earnestness."6

Almost as soon as Dr. Mundy arrived in Wilson, he had a hard, sad duty. Margaret Moss, the widow of Howell Cobb Moss, died at her home on Thursday, January 4, 1894, after a long illness. Dr. Mundy conducted the funeral the next

afternoon, and there was a big turnout to say farewell to this lady who had come to us long ago in March 1868. At prayer meeting the next Wednesday, Dr. Mundy showed he was willing to take some aggressive action about financing: he made some suggestions that were referred to the Finance Committee for action. He and his son presented their letters for membership at this meeting. There is no record of his wife joining. The pastor conducted revival services the fourth week of the month, his purpose apparently being less to evangelize than to forge a sense of unity and purpose among the members. Mundy was also making an effort to get the members to church on time. He had a schedule printed for distribution to each family and was careful to announce meeting times at each gathering.

By the end of February the Mundy family had moved into the "Pastor's

^{5.} Montgomery, Sketches of Old Warrenton, 202–203.

^{6.} Tupper, Two Centuries, 324-325.

^{7.} Wilson Mirror, January 23, 1894.

^{8.} Wilson Mirror, February 14, 1894. Apparently all churches in town had a

Home" at 107 North Pine Street. This was on the property that the church had bought, adjoining the site of the proposed new building. It is not clear whether the house was already there or was built for him. The Wilson Mirror of February 28 noted that the family had moved in, making it sound rather like the house was newly finished. On Friday night, February 23 the church gave him a pounding—a social occasion on which guests brought a pound of groceries as a gift for a person or family. They could be given for anyone, but the custom was especially associated with pastors, who, as we have seen, were not always well paid. This particular evening a lot of folks from other churches came with some household gifts. We were going all-out to please this new pastor of whom we were so proud. The weather that weekend was awful, with snow and sleet. A lot of people had colds—"la grippe," it was called. Dr. Mundy showed up on Sunday morning and found a congregation of eleven people. He called off the evening service and announced that he would preach the sermons he intended to preach this day on the following Sunday. There were certain people he wanted to hear what he had to say.9 At this time, of course, there was no easy way to get word around that a meeting was called off because of the weather.

Our one-time governor and current senator Zebulon B. Vance died April 14, and the citizens of Wilson held a community memorial service, with local clergymen taking part. Our Dr. Mundy gave the prayer. At the time Mundy was preaching his way through another revival. The *Wilson Mirror* for April 25 uses the term "revival" without calling attention to the term. The term "protracted meeting" had evidently gone out of fashion. The editor notes that Mundy "is opposed to the modern evangelistic methods and discouraging everything to excitement, depending on the plain preaching of the Word." Since its founding, Wilson Baptist had been suspicious of highly emotional, manipulative preaching, and Pastor Mundy's style seemed to suit us nicely.

The spring showed a lot of activity, according to notices in the *Wilson Mirror*. One stated that Dr. Mundy was having some important repairs made to the baptistry. Apparently the repairs would be paid for partially by income from a lawn party given by the Ladies' Aid Society for the community at the home of G. W. Blount on Friday, June 1. This is the first mention of a Ladies' Aid Society in our records, but apparently one had existed for some time. "The viands spread will be seasonable, appetizing, and at prices reasonable." The issue of June 6 announced that the party was a success "both in financial"

problem with late comers. Perhaps the ${\it Mirror}$ was referring to what we call church bulletins, but that is not clear.

^{9.} Wilson Mirror, February 28, 1894. We would gather from this that he had come to know his people.

^{10.} Wilson Mirror, May 23, 1894.

and social respects." The culmination of this activity came on a special meeting Monday night, June 25, when we voted to accept an offer of six hundred dollars made by Roscoe G. Briggs for the sale of the church property. We would be expected to be out by August of the same year, 1894, but we could claim all the pews, furniture, and "altar front." (Whoever recorded this in the church book inserted the comment that though Mr. Briggs's parents were Baptists, he seemed not to be familiar with Baptist terminology: Baptists would never have referred to an altar.) The deacons and finance committee had given serious consideration to moving the building itself from Green Street to the new location on Pine but had decided it was not feasible. (A black citizen of Wilson, John Boykin, was in the business of moving entire buildings.) Even though there were times when the church was full, the fact that they considered moving the building would indicate that was not the primary reason for relocating. They may very well have been trying to get away from the railroad, which was only a few yards away.

Proceeds from the sale of the property would go toward the building of a new place of worship, but of course more money would be needed. A building committee of five was appointed, "composed of gentlemen of push and energy," with the pastor as ex officio member, "with plenary power to contract for and push to completion the new house of Worship at the earliest possible moment." To close the meeting, we sang "The Crowning Day." This is the first reference to a particular hymn in our records. It isn't clear what hymnal we may have been using, but the words to this hymn were published in 1881, so our hymnbook would have been published after that date. No longer heard, it appeared as late as the *Broadman Hymnal* of 1940. The words may be read and the tune heard at www.cyberhymnal.org/htm/c/r/crowning.htm.

Sunday School on Sunday afternoon, July 4, 1894, was our last use of the old church building on Green Street. It was then taken over by Briggs and Fleming, tobacconists, to use as a prize house, where a large press (prize) compacted cured tobacco into bales for shipment. In 1897 Silas Lucas bought it, removed the steeple, and moved the structure elsewhere to remodel it as a two-story tenement. The lot was then purchased by a Mrs. McKay, where she would build a residence.¹⁴

From August until Sunday, December 2, all our services were held in the

^{11.} An altar is a place where a priest offers a sacrifice. A table is a place of communion.

^{12.} Valentine, Rise of a Southern Town, 119.

^{13.} Wilson Mirror, June 27, 1894. The Mirror ceased publication at the end of 1894.

^{14.} Wilson Advance, January 21, 1897.



Interior of the Pine Street church, later known as the annex (FBC)

Presbyterian Church at 9:30 A.M. The church has no records from those months, other than that the Lord's Supper was celebrated only once. The pastor and G. W. Blount attended the state Baptist convention in Charlotte and asked for donations to enable Wilson Baptist to buy three stained glass windows for the new church. It is clear from the *Mirror* that not only was the church being constructed, but active efforts were being made to pay for it. On August 8 the paper noted that the Ladies' Aid Society had given another successful benefit lawn party the previous week. The ladies also gave a benefit lecture at Mamona Hall on September 4, by the twenty-three-year-old Baptist Sunday School leader B. W. Spilman. The title of his lecture was "Laugh and Grow Fat." Mr. Spilman was a fat man himself and became well-known for this humorous talk. 15 Meanwhile carpenters, led by our own member

15. By 1896 Baptist work in North Carolina was directed by the so-called "Boys' Brigade." John E. White, then twenty-seven, was the corresponding secretary (chief executive) of the convention, his friend Josiah Bailey, twenty-two, edited the *Biblical Recorder*, and twenty-five-year-old B. W. Spilman the newly appointed Sunday School missionary. Spilman would become an important figure in the Sunday School Board of the SBC.

Lucien Winstead, were working on the building even at night, with Dr. Mundy holding lamps for them. ¹⁶

The *Mirror* for August 22 informs us about a controversy going on in Wilson. People who lived near the churches, which were all downtown, were getting mighty annoyed by all those church bells. There would be two ringings for each service, and the mayor had requested that churches limit the first ringing to four minutes and the second to two minutes. The editor of the paper made the suggestion that they quit ringing them altogether, hold services at the same hour, and let a policeman or someone designated by the churches ring the courthouse bell. No word as to whether or not that was done. Probably not.

Sunday, December 2, 1894, was the big day. We moved into the new church on Pine Street. The building was not quite finished, but as the church clerk put it, we were again "under our own vine and fig tree." The church records have little comment on the occasion, but the *Wilson Mirror* published an account that is worth reproducing here in full.

The Baptists occupied their new church edifice on Sunday and a large congregation filled the house to its utmost capacity. While not finished as it is designed it shall be—the work will continue. It is in habitable condition, and the beloved pastor, Dr. Mundy was desirous of preaching in it on the anniversary of his pastorate. Dr. Mundy has done a wonderful work for the church in Wilson, beset though he was with many hindrances. Besides ministering to the spiritual concerns of the church amid sickness in his own family, he has directed the building of the new house working much with his own hands in pushing forward the work. Employees he found worked for the pay, he for the love of the cause, and what he found necessary to be done and he could do it, he did. The Dr. has aided in several revival meetings in town and elsewhere during the year and shown himself entirely unselfish and solely devoted to the cause of Christ. He has preached the true gospel without sectarian aim—believing that the truth will prevail.

Sunday School was also held that afternoon.¹⁷ On December 13, a Thursday, John E. White returned to Wilson to preach from the pulpit of the new

^{16.} This is from the problematic WDT article of July 26, 1921, but there is no reason to doubt it.

^{17.} Wilson Advance, December 6, 1894.

church on Pine Street.¹⁸ On Sunday, December 23, Wilson Baptist Church held a special thanksgiving service, with a box passed around later for a thank offering. Special envelopes were provided for the occasion, and according to the paper, quite a large sum was contributed.¹⁹

The first business to be conducted in the new year of 1895 was the election of officers. This was done at the Wednesday night meeting of January 23, when two things of interest happened. The Finance Committee, with eight members, included three ladies: Miss Ida Boykin, Miss Bettie Drake, and Sallie Harrison. We had withdrawn fellowship from Ida Boykin in December 1888, but restored her on her testimony and request on April 19, 1893. She must have been an interesting woman to have been thrown out of the church, been restored in a few years, and then in short order become a church leader. In another action the church voted to dissolve the Reference Committee, the group that had kept watch over the morals of the members. Their responsibilities were transferred to the deacons, but it seems that the church, or Dr. Mundy, was beginning to have qualms about a group charged with snooping into people's lives. No doubt the 1893 contretemps with the Blount sisters helped this along. On February 4 three stained glass windows arrived at the depot, and they were installed at the church by Sunday, February 10. One of them was a memorial to John Thomas Barnes and his wife Elizabeth Tart Barnes.

In March we held a two-week revival, running from the 3rd through the 16th. Thomas Judson Shipman came up from Savannah to do the preaching, and a good number made "profession of religion." On Sunday, March 10, Dr. Mundy and Mr. Shipman formed a presbytery to ordain five new deacons: C. E. Blount, W. C. Allen, Lindsay Moye, Cicero Culpepper, and David S. Boykin. The baptism of the new members did not take place immediately. There is a peculiar note in the church records: "by reason of sickness in the family of one of the members Services were discontinued and the Baptism postponed." The baptisms were held Friday, April 5, and the new members were voted in the following Sunday. Does this mean revival services were suspended, or all services were suspended for two weeks? Which family had the sickness? What was the illness? If it was in the pastor's family, why does the record not say that?

A big social event in April was a conundrum supper put on by the Ladies' Aid Society. Conundrum suppers were a big fad around the turn of the century. They appear to have originated in California and spread quickly. Churches especially gave them. Diners were presented with a menu consisting of puzzles. If they couldn't guess the meaning, they would order at

^{18.} Wilson Advance, December 13, 1894.

^{19.} Wilson Advance, December 27, 1894.

random. This kind of thing might appear on the menu: Group of Islands (sandwich), Backbone of History (dates), Things without Ends (doughnuts), Ancient Sacrifice (roast lamb), Unruly Member (boiled tongue). The admission to this supper was one cent, and "you must make the change." Why such an odd figure was one of the conundrums. The supper was to run from seven thirty to ten.²⁰ People evidently thought this was just great. Fashionable, harmless fun.

In May we elected a committee of G. W. Blount, B. F. Briggs, and J. J. Privett, 21 along with the pastor, to see about revising the Articles of Faith and the church constitution. In October we were proud to host the annual meeting of the Tar River Association in our new church building. We agreed to let Dr. Mundy travel to Dunn on the second Sunday of each month to be their part-time pastor. By November there was some anxiety about the debt for the new building; we were hoping to clear the debt by January 1. A committee was appointed to engage an outside fund-raiser. Apparently this committee consisted of two people: Needham B. Broughton of Raleigh (brother of our own Zach Broughton), and our own one-time member John B. Brewer, then at Chowan in Murfreesboro. The records give a list of thirty-six donors and the amounts received, ranging from a pledge of five hundred dollars (Mr. and Mrs. B. F. Briggs) to several pledges of two dollars. Some of the names are of friends of the church rather than members. Silas Lucas, of brick-making fame, gave twenty dollars. G. W. Blount gave three shares of stock in the Wilson Building and Loan Association. This was Mr. Blount's last gift to Wilson Baptist.²² He died November 28, 1895.

Wednesday evening, December 18, we dropped thirteen members who had not been attending. We also elected Sunday School officers: H. C. Thompson as Sunday School superintendent, D. S. Boykin as his assistant, Bettie Drake as treasurer, George W. Stantons as secretary, Hattie Privette as organist, and Robert E. T. Lee as librarian, with authority to appoint two assistants. (Librarian for the Sunday School must have been a bigger job than it would seem.) Cicero Culpepper, a wheelwright with a carriage shop on South Tarboro Street, was authorized to hire a sexton. Elsewhere in the state, on Christmas Eve, the Vanderbilts held an opening gala for their guests at the newly completed Biltmore House.

Among other events of 1895, "America the Beautiful" was written, and Sears and Roebuck opened their inventive new mail-order business. The new year of 1896 was an unsettled time in the United States. The depression that began in 1893 continued, with unemployment at over 14 percent. On January

^{20.} Wilson Advance, April 18, 1895.

^{21.} Possibly a mistake for J. A. Privette.

^{22.} Wilson Advance, November 28, 1895.

18, Roentgen demonstrated the X-ray. In April the first summer Olympics of modern times were held, in Athens. In May the Supreme Court handed down the unfortunate *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision, legalizing racial segregation—as long as conditions were "equal." Later in May the first Dow-Jones averages made their appearance. William Jennings Bryan delivered his electrifying "Cross of Gold" speech at the Democratic National Convention. He became the Democrats' candidate for president, but William McKinley defeated him in the November election. On Christmas Day, John Philip Sousa conducted his "Stars and Stripes Forever" for the first time.

On January 1, 1896, the church at Reidsville called Dr. Mundy as pastor, and he accepted it, with duties to begin there January 29. Oddly, there is nothing about this in our records. We have no idea why he left. He seems to have been well liked; it's hard to imagine our pushing him out. Maybe it was the old story; we weren't paying him as we should. In April 1898, two years later, were taking up a subscription to satisfy the debt we owed him. The fact that no letter of resignation is quoted in the notes and no reason given certainly raises questions. Were we too embarrassed to record the reason? Maybe the clerk simply neglected it. Mundy stayed in Reidsville four years. After Reidsville he returned to Virginia to become pastor of Cabell Street Baptist Church in Lynchburg. While there, his health failed. He and Nellie retired to spend his last years at the old homestead in Amherst County, in the home of a nephew, a niece, and his late brother's widow. He died there of heart failure on May 18, 1910, and is buried in Lynchburg. In an obituary a friend recalled that he could not tolerate crowds and consequently never took an active part in denominational meetings. "Dr. Mundy was richly endowed with a fine intellect, which he studiously cultivated. . . . His sermons were made very forcible by apt illustrations from Scripture, nature, and the observations of the everyday duties of life. He understood human nature, and could adapt himself to any occasion. He was a guiet speaker, but when inspired by his subject he would rise in flights of oratory and eloquence."23

^{23.} I have the obituary by W. J. Shipman as an undated clipping from the *Religious Herald*, presumably published soon after Mundy's death. It is substantially the same as his article on Mundy in Taylor's *Virginia Baptist Ministers*, 5th series, 269–272.

Chapter 14

Youth on Wheels

1896-ca. 1900 (John A. Rood, William Henry Reddish)

One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh.

-ECCLESIASTES 1:4 KJV

HOW MANY YOUNG PEOPLE were in our church in 1896? No one knows, and there's no way to know. An exhaustive check of the church rolls in 1900, running each name through the census records for that year, might give a reasonably close number. The 1890 census was destroyed by a fire, so we can't work backward. The names, however, would be only those of young folks old enough to have actually joined the church. Names of children are not recorded. We must have had a fair number, however, because during the pastorate of John A. Rood a young people's program was born and became active with his encouragement and leadership. It would become a vibrant focus of social activity for children and teenagers that lasted decades. We have to gather this from the local newspaper, because our own church records give not a hint about it.

They don't give much of a hint about John A. Rood, for that matter.

But first, some business. The Finance Committee had been able to get the church's debt down to one thousand dollars. D. L. Gore, of the Atlantic National Bank of Wilmington, held the mortgage at 8 percent. The committee proposed to borrow money on the parsonage lot at 6 percent, pay off the debt to Mr. Gore or his bank, and then gradually retire the local debt. Seems like a businesslike thing to do. At the same business meeting, February 5, we

appointed a search committee to look for a new pastor. On February 17 we authorized the Ladies' Aid Society to take charge of rents on the parsonage, keeping the house up and paying off the debt. The search committee had no report. That was a Wednesday, but on Friday there was a special meeting, for the search committee had a recommendation of someone as a "supply" pastor. This was Bro. J. A. Rood, from Exeter, New Hampshire. We wanted him to start his position with us on March 1. He may not have made it by then, because John E. White returned to preach for us on March 8.¹ Probably different men filled the pulpit in the interim. J. T. Betts of Asheville had been with us on Sunday, January 26, and again on Monday night, to give an illustrated lecture on a recent trip he made to the Holy Land and Europe.²

Another link to the early years broke around the first of March. Mrs. B. F. (Nannie) Briggs died. At its March 2 meeting, the Ladies' Aid Society passed a resolution of sympathy to the family.³ There is no indication as to where the funeral was or who conducted it.

There is no hint anywhere about how we discovered Brother Rood. Did he come all the way down from New Hampshire to take the job? Was he already in the area for some reason? He was thirty-six years old when he came, a widower with his nineteen-year-old son, George. The father and son were natives of New Hampshire; the mother had been too. Nothing is known about their education. Rood first appears in our books as moderating a business meeting on March 19. On April 17 he was in Norfolk to be married to Miss S. Grace Snow, a twenty-eight-year-old native of New Hampshire, who is identified in the paper as coming from Boston. Evidently John and Grace knew each other from back home in New England. The Advance describes Mr. Rood as popular. He "has been here about two months, but already has a strong hold upon the hearts of our people. He is an upright Christian gentleman and an able preacher of the Gospel."4 On April 29 the new Mrs. Rood joined the church. Her husband baptized her on Sunday, May 3. She was of another denomination, probably Methodist. The ever-active Ladies' Aid Society gave a "strawberry festival" at the church on Monday, May 11.5

A short paragraph in the *Wilson Advance* of May 21, 1896, provides some interesting information that is not in the church records. It reports the usual schedule of Sunday meetings: service at eleven o'clock, Sunday School at five, and evening service at eight thirty. It reports that the church has been fres-

- 1. Wilson Advance, March 12, 1896.
- 2. Wilson Advance, January 23 and February 6, 1896.
- 3. Wilson Advance, March 5, 1896. The paper gives the date as March 2, 1886, but that is surely an error.
 - 4. Wilson Advance, April 23, 1896.
 - 5. Wilson News, May 8, 1896.

coed and painted and is looking nice. It also announces a meeting for Sunday night, May 24, which will organize a chapter of the Baptist Young Peoples' Union. Here is where we learn of Pastor Rood beginning his work with the youth of the church. The first BYPU in the country was formed in late 1895, and the idea was beginning to spread. It had a nondenominational air at first but soon became distinctively Baptist.

The first meeting of the Wilson BYPU was actually held in the "spacious quarters" of the Briggs Hotel on Thursday, July 16, with Captain Briggs as host. (Briggs had been a captain in the Confederate army. Most former officers continued to be known by their military titles long after the war.) About forty young people attended. The group would meet each Thursday night, with concerns alternating around devotional, social, literary, and business matters. At the first meeting Pastor Rood opened with prayer and his wife sang a solo, "Yearnings." There were some readings, some more vocal and piano music, and an address by Captain Briggs. Then a "delicious repast" was served by the social committee, after which the young people played some games. They closed by singing "God Be With You."

On August 13 the *Wilson Advance* did a highly unusual thing. Local news was usually reported on page 3. In this issue the lead paragraph on the editorial page (page 2) concerned our pastor's success.

Mr. and Mrs. J. A. Rood deserve much credit for the interest they have aroused in Christian work among the Baptists of Wilson. The social on Thursday night deserves much credit. It was well gotten up and the management was excellent. It was free from those clashes which are often the attendants of church socials. The life and interest along these lines of culture are due in a great measure to the untiring efforts of the pastor and his wife.

It would be interesting to know just what kind of clashes "often" marred church socials in those days, but it's gratifying to know we could avoid them. The meeting in question was probably a BYPU social, since it was on a Thursday night. Given the writing and placement of the editorial, it rather sounds like the paper was plumping for this "supply" pastor to stay around a while. Nothing is said in the minutes of further activity on a search committee's part, so maybe we were happy with what we had.

For the next six months the BYPU began to serve as a bonding factor for the youth of Wilson Baptist Church as well as to attract attention for the community at large. In 1934 the organization morphed into the Baptist Training Union. Today the older members of our congregation remember

the group as the liveliest activity in town for Wilson's young people, Baptists and otherwise. (We speak of the white community, of course. More about the BTU in chapter 30.)

A jolly good time was had at a social meeting in late August, with entertainment by Mrs. Rood, who sang to the guitar accompaniment of William Churchwell. The really fun part was a conundrum salad: everyone received an artificial lettuce leaf with a conundrum written on it. Lots of good refreshments, too, provided by the Hardy family at their home.⁷

A popular entertainment that the BYPU went in for was bicycle tournaments. The *Advance* of November 11 has a long description of one held in Woodard's Warehouse the preceding Friday night. The bike riders, all boys, came colorfully dressed for the occasion. There were three rounds to the tournament. The object apparently was to get rings as they rode in circles, rather like the rings on a merry-go-round. The winner was to crown the queen for the evening; the second-place winner, the first maid of honor; and the third-place winner, the second maid of honor. C. W. Gold was the winner, and he crowned the queen, Julia Dowd. George Stronach, who had come dressed as a woman, came in second and crowned Olivia Sanders. Josh Branch crowned Grace Tomlinson the second maid of honor. Refreshments were served, and the evening succeeding in raising a nice sum of money.⁸

In December the young people gave some thought to breaking up for the winter months, but Pastor Rood advised against it, emphasizing what a wholesome factor the organization had been for the community. Apparently they did not disband for the season, because a date was made for Mr. Ivey, the pastor of the Methodist church, to talk at their next meeting. The Methodist church had an Epworth League, which was a counterpart to the BYPU, and Mr. Ivey appears to have had the same kind of interest in it that Rood did in the Baptist organization. At a church business meeting on December 30 we voted to withdraw fellowship from George W. Batts, because he had announced his intention to sell whiskey at his grocery. Batts had joined the church during the revival of November 1888.

By the end of the year, Wilson had a pretty good telephone system going. In political activity, the Democratic candidate for president, William Jennings Bryan, made a whistlestop speech in Wilson on November 18 before going on to Rocky Mount to deliver an address that evening. The big news of 1887 would break in July, when steamers arrived in Seattle and San Fran-

- 7. Wilson Advance, September 3, 1896.
- 8. Wilson Advance, October 29 and November 12, 1896. The young queen's name is spelled "Jula" in the article.
 - 9. Wilson Advance, December 17, 1896.
 - 10. Telephones: Wilson Advance, July 2, 1896. Bryan's visit was announced prior

cisco with prospectors aboard who had discovered gold in the Klondike region of the Yukon Territory. The Alaska gold rush began. The gold was not in Alaska, but most of the adventurers from all over the world who struggled to get there passed through Alaska. Very few would come home with anything for their suffering but tales to be told.

In late January Wilson Baptist hosted the Tar River Union meeting. The weather was bad, and sickness kept some participants away, so the meetings were curtailed. However, Dr. Mundy preached on Sunday, January 31, 1897, and drew a full house. During the next week evangelistic services were conducted at the church by J. T. Edmundson, a professional evangelist educated at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. The meetings were well attended in spite of the weather, but apparently no decisions were made. 11 Also in February the BYPU held a convention in Raleigh. Our pastor, John A. Rood, delivered an address titled "The Social Feature of Young People's Societies." The Advance of February 11 is pleased to commend Mr. Rood once again for his successful work with young people in Wilson. The April 1 issue tells us that Pastor Rood has finished a series of sermons titled "Modern Foes in Classic Faces" and that his subject on Sunday evening April 4 will be "Stop and Think." This issue also contained an advertisement for the Seaboard Air Line (a railroad), offering half-rate fare for those attending the Southern Baptist Convention to be held in Wilmington in May.

The BYPU continued its work. The *Advance* for April 15 reported a delightful evening Thursday the week before at the Boykin home on Nash Street. On April 29 there was another bicycle spectacular at the Centre Brick Warehouse. Girls as well as boys participated this time; each rider represented a local business, and a local orchestra played during the competition. Fred Crews and Gertie Blount "executed some very pretty figures, which brought forth rounds of applause." The winners were Miss Ell Green (for Hargrave's Pharmacy) and Master William Bass (for R & G Corsets). Refreshments were sold. A big crowd was there, and it swelled the amount in the BYPU treasury by "several dollars." ¹¹²

Sunday, May 16, was Brother Rood's last Sunday with us. The newspaper reported that he intended to move to Richmond for a short while.¹³ We know he did, since on September 27 we gave Grace Rood a letter of dismission to join a Baptist church there. John Rood seems never to have become a member officially. Some of us were probably not sorry to see the Roods leave.

to the event in the September 17 issue of the *Advance*, and reported on the front page of the *Wilson Times*, September 18.

^{11.} Wilson Advance, February 4, 1897.

^{12.} Wilson Advance, May 6, 1897.

^{13.} Wilson Advance, May 13, 1897.

His pastorate was short, and it is clear that he accomplished a great deal with young people's work during his stay in Wilson, but that may have been a problem, as we will shortly see. Also, the treasurer had reported on March 31 that we had \$1.12 in the treasury, but we were behind in our payments to the pastor by \$83.78. (I think we see a pattern here.) Both Mr. Rood and his successor, W. H. Reddish, served as pastor of New Hope Baptist Church up the road while serving Wilson Baptist.

Mr. and Mrs. Rood and son George were living on the Edgecombe County side of Rocky Mount in 1900. The census record for this year is our source for their ages and places of birth. The name is spelled "Rude" there, which though wrong at least indicates how the name was pronounced. Both father and son are identified there as ministers. Apparently they both went into the Methodist church. We don't know, but it's natural to assume that while in Wilson Rood became good friends with Pastor Ivey at the Methodist church, and perhaps Ivey influenced him. Opposition to the BYPU program in Wilson may also have been on his mind. By 1901 J. A. Rood may have been serving the Methodist church in Williamston. His son George was ordained an elder in the Methodist Episcopal Church/South in 1903. He served several North Carolina churches, studied a year or so at Vanderbilt, and spent most of his career, from 1908 to his retirement in 1939, as a Methodist minister in Virginia. The younger Rood died November 26, 1958. 4 I have not been able to trace his father's later career, but at some point, while living in Richmond, "Rev. J. A. Rood" was advertising himself as a lecturer. A flyer advertises that "the Stereopticon used is one of the finest dissolving instruments made in America or Europe, and is operated by a lady. The illumination is with Oxy-Hydrogen Calcium. The results are perfectly charming."15 He offered a choice of half a dozen edifying illustrated talks.

We had a visitor for the business meeting of June 20, Arch C. Cree. Cree was a student at Wake Forest College at the time and was probably filling the pulpit for us. He was a native of Scotland whose family had come to live on a farm near Henderson, North Carolina, in 1888. Cree went on to become a prominent figure in Southern Baptist life, especially among Georgia Bap-

^{14.} Information from Steven Bradley, archivist of the Virginia Methodist Conference, and a former member of FBC Wilson.

^{15.} The flyer is among the Isaac Morton Mercer Papers at WFU, preserved only because of the notes Mercer scribbled on the back. We will meet Mr. Mercer in chapter 19. The projector involved did not project 3-D images. It could accommodate more than one slide, and dissolve from one image into another, holding the audience's attention, while the projectionist ("a lady!") replaced one slide with another. The chemical term describes the light bulb used. Traveling lecturers were a popular source of entertainment at the time.



William Henry Reddish (From Seven to Sevenfold: A History of the First Baptist Church Wadesboro, image courtesy of North Carolina Baptist Collection, Z. Smith Reynolds Library, Wake Forest University)

tists. ¹⁶ On this night in Wilson he presided at a business meeting, and the notes record that he gave some "advice and instructions," probably about prospective candidates for pastor. If Cree was there as a supply pastor on a temporary basis, nothing is said of it. However, on July 4, 1897, we issued a call to Bro. W. H. Reddish to supply for us for three months at a salary of fifty dollars per month. He accepted.

William Henry Reddish was born about 1869 in Wake County, attended Wake Forest College and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, and was ordained October 15, 1893. He apparently came to us after supplying for several small churches in Kentucky.

Mr. Reddish, a bachelor, was on the scene by August 4, 1897, when he presided at a Wednesday business meeting. A month later we decided he was a keeper, so we asked him to be our pastor at a salary of at least \$50 per month, but not to exceed \$750 per year. On September 29 we asked Mr. Reddish to get in touch with John E. White and his friend Josiah Bailey, editor of the *Biblical Recorder*, and ask John to come preach for us and Bailey to come lecture for us at some time of their convenience. We also instructed the Ladies' Aid Society and the BYPU to give monthly reports at church business meetings. That may be significant; keep it in mind for a few paragraphs. Brother Reddish received his letter from his home church, Mt. Vernon in Wake County, and joined us formally in December.

The big event of 1898 was the Spanish-American War, which began soon after the explosion of the USS *Maine* in Havana's harbor on February 15 and ended on August 12. There is no record of any involvement of our members in this war. Although it is possible that some white Wilsonians were in the regular army or navy, none volunteered for service, although twenty colored men from the city did. They were stationed in Macon, Georgia, when four of their regiment, including Robert Thomas from Wilson, were killed by white civilians.¹⁷

The church got off to a nice start in 1898, though. In April Alex Quarles

^{16.} Graham, Baptist Biography, 87-92.

^{17.} Roster of North Carolina Volunteers, 89–91, 118–120; Valentine, Rise of a Southern Town, 126, 167, 257.

gave the church a handsome finial and weathervane, which we happily accepted. We appointed Hattie Privette as organist and Bessie Worthington as choir director. We appointed a committee to solicit funds to pay off that embarrassing debt to Dr. Mundy. Sunday afternoon, June 5, Mr. Reddish had the sad duty of conducting the funeral of young Mark W. Farmer, a recent graduate of UNC, who had drowned. It must have been a big event in town, since the *Advance* gave it a long write-up, which was quite rare. He was buried "under the white and blue" (UNC colors) in Maplewood, after prayer by Brother Reddish and singing by the church choir.¹⁸

By the Wednesday meeting, June 22, however, some simmering discontent came to the surface. We agreed to give Pastor Reddish thirty days leave of absence in July. There was some money still owed on chandeliers, and we took up a collection for that, apparently raising the \$5.25 necessary. It appears we owed Bro. W. W. (Billy) Simms some payment for something or other, and we asked the deacons to have a private meeting with him the next Monday. Then came the hot issue, which may have been brought to the surface by a dance held the evening before, which was given prominent attention in the Wilson Advance of June 23. A motion was made to adopt the following resolution: "Resolved that the Wilson Baptist Church shall hereafter prohibit all entertainments and lectures in or out of the church to raise money for the benefit of the Church or any of its auxiliaries." The motion passed, with two ladies dissenting. It would be interesting to know whether they participated in the discussion. Then came some remarks about "the Language used by some of its members, Dancing, Drinking and immoral acts." This too was referred to the deacons.

It seems clear that a lot of the activities that were taking place during John Rood's pastorate were not approved of, especially those of the BYPU and the Ladies' Aid Society. That must have been the reason why during that meeting back in September we had asked these two groups to give monthly reports on what they were doing. Discontent surely came up about these matters before Mr. Rood left, and it may well have had something to do with his decision to join the Methodist Church.

We were not finished with this business. On June 28 (according to the minutes; I suspect that Wednesday, June 29, is meant) we had the Church Covenant and Articles of Faith read aloud. Then a resolution prepared by Kinchen H. Watson, owner of a tobacco warehouse, was offered by Brother Boykin and seconded by Brother Culpepper:

Resolved, that in the opinion of Wilson Baptist Church, that attending Germans, Public Dancing, frequenting Bar Rooms,

^{18.} Wilson Advance, June 9, 1898; records of Maplewood Cemetery.

Cursing, Swearing, and taking the Name of the Lord in Vain is "Walking Disorderly" and should not be tolerated in a Baptist Church. Therefore any member being guilty of any of the above offenses should be subject to the discipline of the Church; Resolved 2nd, that it is the duty of any member knowing of any Brother or Sister guilty of any of the above offenses to report them to the Board of Deacons.

Nothing is said about a vote. We are left to infer that one was taken and it passed, but there's no indication of opposition to it. "Germans" were fancy dress balls. The usage seems to be associated primarily with Rocky Mount, but they were held here also. 19 A big one had been held the Friday night after Easter, April 15, at the Centre Brick Warehouse. The Wilson Advance had a long write-up of it in their April 21, 1898, issue. It was obviously the social event of the season and would have been on the front page of the Society section if the weekly paper had had such a thing. Names of the dancers were given, and, in the case of the girls, a description of their dresses. Some were from out of town, as far away as New York. But there were also lots of spectators, and some of our members surely took part. That it was primarily a young people's occasion is evident from the fact that the Advance names the nine ladies who were chaperones. Memories of the event must have been simmering for a couple of months. A Tuesday night dance on June 21 may have brought feelings to the surface, right before the resolutions passed on June 22 and 28. For a lot of members, there may not have been much distinction between a German and all the big events, like bicycle tournaments, that the BYPU had been holding. The bonding of teenagers into groups with their own activities was a new development, and some of the older folks were clearly uncomfortable with it, no matter what the editor of the Advance thought about it. There must have been some resentment, too, about the activities of the Ladies' Aid Society. When July came around Mr. Reddish was probably ready for a vacation.

At the Wednesday meeting, September 21, Mr. Boykin offered to put doors in the vestibule if the church would raise at least seventy-five dollars for carpeting. The matter was referred to an ad hoc committee consisting of two men, including Boykin, and three ladies. They were to report at the next business meeting, but nothing more is said about the matter in the minutes. On Sunday, October 16, there was a large attendance at church for the first anniversary of the founding of the Woman's Missionary Society. C. C. Crit-

tenden, principal of the Graded School, gave the address.²⁰ We know from Crittenden's own letters that he had a special interest in missionary work.²¹

Things must have cooled down by the next January, when at a special conference held after the Sunday service, January 15, Mr. Crittenden offered the following resolution: "Resolved that the resolution prohibiting the Church from holding any entertainment in and out hereby repealed, and such entertainment be allowed, provided that the program for every such proposed entertainment be submitted for and entirely subject to the approval of the Pastor and Deacons." It passed.

There seems to be no record of when Brother Crittenden joined the church, but he stayed with us only one year, while he was principal of the Graded School. He was a young man, just twenty-seven years old, but he seems to have played an important part in calming a controversy. He was in a unique position to do so. He was an avid cyclist, and bicycles seem to have been part of the problem. Not that there was necessarily anything sinful about bicycles—though some had their doubts—but they gave rise, perhaps for the first time in history, to a youth culture distinct from society at large. The bicycle set young people apart as a special group, just as in the next century the invention of the transistor would further mark out youth as a separate part of American life, tuned in on their newly portable radios to music that their parents had no use for or much knowledge of. On top of this, an actual organization limited to young people, though with adult supervision, had been formed: the BYPU. This was a new thing. Even the Boy Scouts were still in the future. Elders in the church may have felt, if not threatened, at least disquieted, by this frenetic youthful activity over which they had little to say. On top of that, the men evidently did not like it that the women were engaged in so much public activity of their own.

What was happening in Wilson Baptist Church was reflecting a quandary in American society at large, because there was a definite connection between bicycles and the feminism of the time. Bicycles enabled young people to go riding off together to who knows where to do who knows what. Bicycling led "young and innocent girls into ruin and disgrace." As far as young women were concerned, they were "freedom machines." Bicycles raised the ticklish question of what was appropriate women's clothing. With the dropframe "girl's bike" long skirts were possible but still not practical. Bloomers shocked a lot of people, but the only real alternative was trousers, and that was simply unthinkable. Bicycles alerted folks to the fact "that women have

^{20.} Wilson Advance, October 20, 1898; CCC to "Dear Nip," October 14, 1898. Charles Christopher Crittenden, Sr., Papers, Collection 1358, North Carolina Division of Archives and History, Raleigh.

^{21.} CCC to "Dear Nip," Murfreesboro, Tenn., October 20, 1896.



C. C. Crittenden, Sr. (North Carolina Division of Archives and History)

legs like any one else, and that they are made for use." Was it proper to ride a bike on Sunday? What about young cyclists tearing toward pedestrians at high speed? Oh, bicycles brought on all sorts of problems.²²

Charles Christopher Crittenden was not far removed from his teenage years himself. He was over that giddy stage of life, but not so old that he could not relate to it and interpret the activities of youth to an older generation. He had a head on his shoulders. He was a brilliant teacher, an active church member, probably a member of the choir. He came to us from Murfreesboro, Tennessee, where he had not only sung in the choir but had become director of it.²³ He had a responsible position in

Wilson, and people respected him. Reading between the lines of the minutes, it seems that he defused a controversy.

After arriving in Wilson, Crittenden wrote his brother "Nip": "This week I started into society somewhat. I have paid three visits, and tonight I have another scheduled. My beginning has been auspicious as far as the young ladies are concerned; one threatens to treat me even *too* well. But my first venture angered the parson into whose territory I am trespassing." The young unmarried Mr. Reddish must have seen him as something of a rival, especially concerning a Miss (Gladys) Clark. She is "the belle of the town, and a young woman of very superior qualities. Her piano playing is superb. Both the parson and my former room-mate have scorched their wings in her flame." He and Reddish became good friends, however. He sent Nip a letter from Wake Forest on July 4, 1899, telling him how excited he was that Reddish was going to come and spend some time. "We are planning some jolly days," he wrote. 16

^{22.} Herlihy, Bicycle, 264-272.

^{23.} CCC to "Dear Nip," Murfreesboro, Tenn., October 9, 1896.

^{24.} CCC to "My Dear Nip," December 10, 1898.

^{25.} CCC to "Dear Nip," January 3, 1899.

^{26.} C. C. Crittenden conducted a fairly extended correspondence with his brother, which is in the Crittenden, Sr., collection in Raleigh. Much of the writing is taken up with his tremendous enthusiasm for bicycling, which brother Nip was also

Mr. Crittenden was teaching pedagogy and physical education at Wake Forest College when he got married in July 1901. In December 1902, his wife Ellie gave birth to a son. Shortly thereafter, in March 1903, Mr. Crittenden fell sick on a Sunday and died nine days later. He was an athlete in fine physical condition: a gymnast, a baseball player, a long-distance cyclist. The illness sounds like acute rheumatic fever, with death due to congestive heart failure. All activities at the college were called off the next day.²⁷ It was a sudden body blow to the institution. A lot of column inches were taken up in papers around the state telling of his death. Even the janitor at the college, W. L. Young, wrote a brief piece on how respectful Mr. Crittenden had always been to him. Crittenden's son, CCC Jr., was later director of the North Carolina Division of Archives and History from 1935 to 1968. A large oil painting of him hangs in the building on Jones Street in Raleigh. Our young man, his daddy, would have been proud.

O. L. Stringfield came from Raleigh to preach for us in March 1899 and to hold a series of meetings in April.²⁸ In August, the Ladies' Missionary Society (presumably with the approval of the deacons) put on a musical performance with out-of-town musicians to raise money for the Baptist Female University in Raleigh—now known as Meredith College. ²⁹ Brother Reddish conducted two funerals of note late in the year. Sunday, October 28, he held services for H. C. Moss, Jr., who died of tuberculosis at age twenty-five. ³⁰ Then on Sunday, December 17, he conducted church services for Captain Arthur Barnes, who had died in Washington, DC, the day before. Barnes had been clerk of court here from 1868 to 1876, but he was then appointed to the staff of the U.S. Senate's sergeant at arms. At the time of his death he was retired and still living in DC, but he called Wilson home, so his fellow Masons in Washington saw that he returned, to be buried in Maplewood. There was a long write-up in the local paper.³¹

Also in 1899, P. L. Woodard's farming supply and hardware store opened. Mr. Reddish left us sometime in 1900, it would seem. He married in 1903 and became pastor of FBC in Gastonia, moving from there to Reidsville in

into. He thought the area around Wilson just about the best place in the world for riding a bicycle. See his letter to Nip of October 14, 1898.

^{27.} Raleigh Times, March 24, 1903. I owe thanks to Dr. Hoke Bullard (no relation) who helped me interpret antique medical terms in writing this book.

^{28.} Stringfield became deaf and died at age seventy-nine when hit by a train while he was walking home along a track near Wendell (*New York Times*, February 2, 1930). His son Lamar was the founder and first conductor of the North Carolina Symphony.

^{29.} Wilson News, March 30, 1899; April 6, 1899; August 3, 1899.

^{30.} Wilson News, November 2, 1899.

^{31.} Wilson News, December 21, 1899.

1912. Both he and his wife were very popular and active there, but he developed heart problems and resigned in 1918. Feeling some better, he later accepted a call to the church in Millen, Georgia. There he died of a heart attack while preparing to go to services on a Sunday morning in 1919. His funeral was held in Morganton, his wife's hometown, where he was buried. Many old friends from Gastonia came up for the occasion.³²

Our next pastor, John Jordan Douglass, wrote a poem on the death of W. H. Reddish. They had probably been friends at college; they attended Southern Baptist Theological Seminary at the same time.

To W. H. Reddish

Dear friend, who gently fell asleep,
Nor yet had left the battle line,
Sweet be thy slumber, calm and deep;
May love's bright memory-blossoms keep
Its fragrant bloom
Above thy tomb—
Thou who art clothed with life and love divine.

Blow gently, Southern breeze, above his grave; Shine softly, sun and moon and golden star; He was so generous and so brave, So full the cup of gladness that he gave; So rich his gift; The sunlight through the rift; The guiet sea across the bar.³³

^{32.} Huntley, From Seven to Sevenfold, 42–44. There is a notice of his death in the minutes of the Pee Dee Association (1919), 23.

^{33.} Douglass, The Bells, 63.

Chapter 15

The Corner of Pine and Nash

Ca. 1900–1909 (John Jordan Douglass, John T. Jenkins)

With the LORD there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption.

—PSALM 130:7 (KJV)

THE REASON WE CANNOT ACCOUNT for the time of Reddish's departure is that there is a yawning gap in the church records after the September 13, 1899, meeting. (We know from newspaper records that he was here through December.) The next entry is February 8, 1905. There are no pages excised from the ledger at this point, only several blank pages. Unlike with other missing years in our records, nothing in the book has been destroyed. An entire pastorate, that of J. J. Douglass, falls in this period. Unfortunately there are no newspapers extant from these years to help fill in the gap. Mr. Douglass is listed among our pastors in the Memory Booklet prepared in 1995, but I am at a loss to know where his name came from, unless it was from the memory of Lucy Culpepper, whom we will meet in the next chapter as working on a historical committee in 1960. When the minutes resume in 1905, John T. Jenkins is pastor. His pastorate is dated from 1904 through 1909 in the Memory Booklet, but the church records say nothing about his coming to us. People at the time were aware that records were not being kept. At the March 15 meeting of 1905, a month after the records resume, Z. T. Broughton called the church's attention to the fact that there were no records for all that time, and a committee of three—D. B. Gaskins, W. M. Moss, and John Blount—was appointed "to write a skeleton History of Church between

above mentioned dates." B. F. Briggs was later added to the committee. If that report was ever written, it has not survived, at least to my knowledge. The clerk in 1905 left room in the record book for it to be inserted later, but there are only blank pages.¹

Somewhere in that undocumented time we were served by John Jordan Douglass as our pastor. He probably began in 1902, and we know from the *Biblical Recorder* that his last Sunday with us was January 31, 1904. On that day we passed a resolution:

Whereas, our beloved pastor, Rev. J. J. Douglass, has submitted his resignation; and

Whereas, in accepting the same it is the desire of the church to give expression regarding Brother Douglass; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That it is the sense of this meeting that our church has in its past history been served by few ministers of greater pulpit ability than Brother Douglass; that his labors for the past years have been sincere and honest and drawn to him a strong circle of friends and admirers who are loath to give him up; that we commend him with sincere affection to the charge to be next served by him with assurances of our prayers and sincere best wishes.²

It sounds like he did a good job for us, although he seems to have left with nowhere in particular to go. The church did not grant him and his wife letters of dismission until December 6, 1905, but in those days preachers seemed to be in no hurry to become members of their churches. Douglass was a really interesting fellow, and it's too bad we don't have any records from his time. He was born August 4, 1875, in Cumnock, in Lee County, between Siler City and Sanford. The family later lived in Troy and Carthage, where JJ finished prep school. He attended Wake Forest College from 1892 to 1894, but apparently did not graduate. He attended Southern Baptist Theological Seminary for one year, 1895–1896. He was ordained at a session of the Sandy Creek Baptist Association in 1895 and served a succession of small churches for brief periods. In February 1897 he married Annie Rumley of Beaufort, North Carolina, where he was pastor at the time. In October 1900 he was conduct-

^{1.} The original copy of our first record book is in the Baptist Historical Collection at Wake Forest University. Mr. and Mrs. Hayes, in their careful transcript, simply indicated that a gap exists.

^{2.} BR, February 10, 1904. As mentioned above, Douglass's name never appears in the extant church records.

ing Sunday morning services at a church he was serving in Sampson County and returned home to find that his two-year-old daughter Annie had just died. John and his wife Annie would have four other children later, and one of those died in infancy.

After leaving us in January 1904, he was supplying in Dunn by March, and they called him. In August 1905 he resigned the church at Dunn and took Tabernacle Baptist Church at New Bern, where he stayed only until December 1906. Then he went to Clio, South Carolina, where he spent five years, and then decided to go into the ministry of the Presbyterian Church. He served various Presbyterian churches in North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee, staying at each of them for longer terms of service than he gave any of his Baptist churches. According to his daughter Virginia, his break with the Baptists came over the issue of closed communion, which he could not defend.

Virginia was his daughter by his second wife, Martha Taylor. His first wife died in June 1927, and the next year he met Martha, who was a student at Carson-Newman College in Jefferson City, Tennessee, while Douglass was pastor there. Douglass was known as something of a literary figure and was invited to an English class at the college to read some of his poetry. Martha was in the class. One thing led to another, and before you knew it, this fiftythree-year-old Presbyterian preacher was off on a wedding trip to the beach with his coed bride, with her doing the driving. She learned to drive just for the occasion. You see, Mr. Douglass never did learn. He tried—and over the years he had owned a car or two—but he never quite got the hang of using the brake. He kept running into things. So he gave up, and from that time on hired a chauffeur. Young Martha learned to drive so that they wouldn't have to take the chauffeur with them on their honeymoon. I got this information firsthand from their daughter by telephone. She lives in Greenville, South Carolina. Her father, she says, was about five foot ten, not a forceful person nor given to talking a lot. As a boy the only thing he ever wanted to be was a preacher; he would even carry a Bible around with him.

Regarding Douglass's preaching, a friend wrote: "An avid reader, Douglass accumulated a formidable library and was known both for his studious care in preparing sermons and the superior quality of his deliverance. He spoke clearly and forcefully in an extemporaneous fashion, without notes of any kind. His sermons were sprinkled with high imagery and multiple poetic references to buttress his careful exegesis of the Scriptures." ³

Douglass was a prolific writer, especially of poetry, but he also tried his hand at fiction and dramatization. He published a novel, *The Girdle of the Great, or, The New South.* He wrote, but never published, a couple more.

^{3.} C. Sylvester Green in Powell, DCNB, 1:100.



John Jadan Douglass

John Jordan Douglass (Douglass, *Gates of Dreams*; image courtesy of State Library of North Carolina, a Division of the Department of Cultural Resources)

He collected some of his poems into an attractive, handsomely illustrated little volume titled *The Bells* (1919). Another collection was published as *The Quest of* the Star (1916?). His widow published a larger collection (315 pages) titled *Gates* of Dreams (1940). Little of his work was religious. He wrote poems on all sorts of things—the sea, peace, southern pride, the seasons, famous people (such as Stonewall Jackson, Woodrow Wilson, and Sir Walter Raleigh), the mountains, Carson-Newman College, the goddess of the great outdoors, friends and family, on and on. He did some embarrassing pieces in Negro dialect. (John E. White could write that way, too.) Our last chapter ended with a poem on the death of his friend Reddish. He contributed individual poems and stories to quite a number of publications. He published a dramatization of an 1899 novel by Canon Patrick Sheehan, My New Curate. What attracted Douglass

to this book is hard to say, but in it a young Catholic priest in Ireland is assigned by his bishop to a certain parish where he figured he would have a lot of time for writing poetry, which the bishop knew he enjoyed, although this is not the main theme of the book or of Douglass's version of the story. Maybe it was Douglass's dream to have a small church somewhere that could support him while he indulged his literary passions. He loved to fish, and he would go fishing off the North Carolina shores as well as fly-fishing in the mountains. At the time of his death, May 28, 1940, he had been serving the Presbyterian Church at Newton, just out of Hickory, for ten years.

We know nothing about Douglass's stay in Wilson except what we can gather from the resolution we passed on the occasion of his resignation.

^{4.} The novel was also dramatized by the famous Irish playwright Sean O'Casey. R. G. Hogan and R. Dunham's *Years of O'Casey*, 342, mentions Douglass's dramatization as having been published in Louisville "around 1919." The entry for it at UNC-CH, which has the item in the antique micro-opaque form, gives the date as "18—?" The title page gives no date but names the copyright holder as "Brother Benjamin, C.F.X., President, St. Xavier's College, Louisville, Ky."

He would have been our pastor when Atlantic Christian College⁵ opened in 1902, and when the Wright brothers made their first flight out on Kitty Hawk in 1903. To resume our story we have to jump across a few years and come down in February 1905, when John Thomas Jenkins is our pastor. He seems to have begun in July 1904.⁶ According to good sources, he came to us from Marietta, Georgia, where he pastored several churches in the association.⁷

Brother Jenkins was born January 22, 1866, in Mouth of Wilson, Virginia.⁸ The family soon moved across the state line to Alleghany County in North Carolina. He seems to have been the only pastor we ever had without any higher education, but he was a good speaker and writer. He was ordained in the late 1880s and married Fannie Cooper in 1891. An early portrait shows that he was a dashingly handsome young man. He held pastorates from one end of North Carolina to the other, from Waynesville to Wilmington and Morehead City, and did a lot of evangelistic work as well. He won a lot of converts. The minutes of Fork Baptist (near Mocksville) in 1893 say, "He is bold to tell the people their faults and warns them of the danger of going willfully to hell." This does not seem to be the kind of preaching that Baptists in Wilson had ever gone in for, and it would be interesting to learn how we found him, or how he found his way here from way down there in Georgia.

John and his wife Frances ("Fannie") Cooper had four children when they arrived in Wilson. A daughter (Sarah) and a son (George) would be born here.

At the first business meeting after the gap in our records, Wednesday, February 8, 1905, we were discussing the possibility of a new building. "The Church plan was then introduced and explained at some length by Bro. R. E. Hagan, after which motion by Bro. [Z. T.] Broughton the plan was adopted by a unanimous vote." The plan had to do with building a sanctuary on our property at the corner of Pine and Nash. At the March 15 meeting Brother Hagan reported that the Building Committee "had gone as far as

- 5. Atlantic Christian College (now Barton College) is a small liberal arts college of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). The campus is only a few blocks from our present church.
- 6. The *BR* of May 16, 1906, contains a communication from Jenkins while in Enfield indicating that he hopes they can move into the new church by "middle of July (my second anniversary)." A June issue shows a portrait of Mr. Jennings along with an architect's drawing of the church. There is no accompanying text, but presumably the new building was to be occupied soon.
- 7. This and some later data is from information compiled by Daniel Merritt, and made available by the Partee Center at William Jewell College, Liberty, MO.
- 8. Yes, there is such a place. It is almost in North Carolina. One wonders how many bad jokes he had to put up with while he was preaching in Wilson.
 - 9. Quoted by Daniel Merritt, insert to The Men behind the Pulpit.

they felt authorized to go." Brother Hester then moved that the church empower the Building Committee to build "the New Church as per plans which had already been accepted by the Church at a former meeting." Mrs. Hagan seconded the motion. This is the first time we have any record of a woman actively participating in the discussions at business meetings. It may well have been going on for a while. The "former meeting" at which the church adopted some plans falls into the time gap mentioned above, and it is at this point that Brother Broughton called attention to the fact that we had no records for a long period in our history, and the committee was appointed to reconstruct a "skeleton history."

It's evident that a new generation of leaders is running the affairs of the church now. Hagan and Broughton are names we have not run across before. In the records of the first church book the last recorded admission is that of the Mundys in January 1894. A new church book begun in 1907 will record some admissions from the interim period, but not all. There is no record of when Broughton joined the church, though we know that he was given a letter to move to Greenville in 1908. Mr. Broughton was an auctioneer. Needham Broughton High School in Raleigh is named for a brother, one of the founders of Tabernacle Baptist there. Another brother, Melville, became governor. Although R. E. Hagan is written down as active in church business at least as early as March 1905, he did not actually join, according to the record, until October 9, 1905. He joined by statement. This is worth bearing in mind

The business meeting of April 4, 1905, should be read in the light of the resolution passed June 28, 1898, prohibiting church organizations (meaning the BYPU and the Ladies' Aid Society) from holding benefit entertainments on behalf of the church. This was the action rescinded the next January at young Mr. Crittenden's request. Evidently since that time a lot of activity had been going on. The church treasurer reported carrying over from February \$18.61. During March \$184.37 had been collected, all designated for specific purposes (such as \$1.53 for the Poor Fund). The church still had no budget. Every collection was for a specific purpose, and perhaps individuals could write on their offering envelopes the purpose for which the money was given. After paying \$100.57 for pastor's salary and "general expenses," \$83.30 on the church debt, and a generous 50 cents for poor relief, the church treasury had a total on hand of \$14.04. The Ladies' Aid Society reported a bit more: they had \$174.76. A group called Modern Priscillas reported having \$125.05, after paying out \$35 for hymnals. The Dorcas Society held \$177. The Ladies' Missionary Society could say that they had sent off \$32 for foreign and associational missions. Obviously the women of the church were the active fund-raisers. Of course, few if any of these ladies had jobs outside the homes, and any church work their menfolk would do had to be done evenings or weekends. Still, the ladies must be given credit, and it's obvious that these are not the quiet little ladies wearing bonnets who showed up with their husbands at the courthouse back in May 1860, before the Civil War. These women wore hats. Big, broad, assertively showy hats. This was a new generation of female leadership gearing up, without knowing it, for life in a world soon to be changed forever by a war fought in Europe.

"Modern Priscillas" was a name in fairly common use for women's clubs around the country at the time, though there doesn't seem to have been any national organization, and it doesn't seem to have been specifically associated with churches. For several decades there was a popular magazine for women titled Modern Priscilla. It reached an audience of younger women willing to take some initiative and distinguish themselves from previous generations. Clearly some women in Wilson had to take some initiative to start the club. It probably centered on needlework, just as the magazine did. Mr. Taylor, the church clerk, seems to know so little about the group that he calls them "Modern Precellars." Spelling was not his long suit—he misspells "Dorcas" also—but it's striking that he doesn't recognize the biblical name Priscilla (Acts 18:2-3, the same person called Prisca in 1 Corinthians 16:19, Romans 16:3–5, and 2 Timothy 4:19). She was a tentmaker, hence the connection with sewing. These modern Priscillas were part of the first generation of housewives to give us what we consider the traditional southern breakfast, since baking powder had been available in grocery stores for only a few years. Really modern women could make the flour biscuit we grew up with using Royal Baking Powder and, instead of lard, the newfangled Cottolene shortening. Royal Baking Powder was prominently advertised in the local papers, and Cottolene was heavily advertised in the Biblical Recorder. A scary headline in the shortening ad read, "Are you a lard eater?"

A series of meetings began April 17. Nothing is said in the church minutes about it, but Zach Broughton wrote a letter to the *Biblical Recorder* mentioning it and saying that the church had given \$105 for foreign missions and the WMS had given \$100. He goes on to say: "The contract is let for our new church, and work will begin in a few days." He adds that we are straining to raise money for the new church. We must not have raised as much as we expected or as soon, since it does not appear that work began seriously until after March 11, 1906, when we agreed to borrow the money. We got as far as laying a cornerstone in 1905, for it is now mounted in the wall to the narthex of our church, saying simply "Baptist Church 1905." This would have been no earlier than August, since a copy of the *Biblical Recorder* for August 1, 1905, was placed in the cornerstone with other mementoes that were transferred to the cornerstone for the present church when it was laid in 1951.



John T. Jenkins (Biblical Recorder)

By November Brother Jenkins had probably been with us about a year. At a business session this month he mentioned that he had already been away from the church several times during his stay here holding revivals in other parts of the state. He said he had a couple of more lined up, but he wanted the church to vote on whether this activity was "benefitional or injurious to the Church at Wilson," He said he felt a call to do this. There was some discussion. but the church gave him a standing vote of confidence to proceed, with our sympathy and prayers in his evangelistic work. Not to be cynical or anything, but with all those children, he probably also felt a financial need to augment his

income. He sent the *Biblical Recorder* occasional references to successful meetings he was holding. It may have been a cost-free way of advertising his services.

In December there is a note that the Building Committee should make some arrangement for putting water into the baptistry, "one that could be transferred to the New Building when completed." The new building was at that time still in our minds' eyes only. On March 11, 1906, we unanimously adopted this resolution:

Resolved that we the Members and Congregation of the Wilson Baptist Church in Special Call[ed] Conference and business Meeting assembled this 11th day of March, 1906, do authorize and empower the Board of Trustees and Building Committee of our church to borrow sufficient amount of money for the purpose of building and furnishing our New House of Worship, and that they are hereby authorized in said negotiations to execute all such notes and mortgages on our church property as may be necessary in the [process].

Apparently work on the church began soon after that. In April, San Francisco was hit by the great earthquake and ensuing fires. Here, not much of interest is recorded until November, when we granted Bro. Sidney Edgerton, an eighteen-year-old member, a "certificate" to preach the gospel. This was what we would call licensing. His father, also a member, was a carpenter who

had come up from South Carolina. We would ordain Sidney to the ministry in 1911.

It is strange that there is no specific reference as to just when we occupied the sanctuary at the corner of Pine and Nash on the corner now occupied by First Citizens Bank. The church minutes are just matter-of-fact business matters. Apparently it was sometime in July, judging from the BR of May 16, 1906, cited in note 5 above. If so, the work was done very quickly, unless work was well under way by March 11, when we passed the resolution quoted above. While we may well have occupied the church in July, it was probably not formally dedicated until December. At a regular meeting on December 6, we issued an invitation to Dr. Mundy to return for "our memorial services to be held on the third Sunday in [December] 1906." This would have been fitting, since we remember that Mundy had wanted very much to preach in the new Pine Street building on the anniversary of his coming to Wilson. In addition, there is a clipping from a publication called *The Messenger* for December 21, 1906, which honors George W. Blount on the occasion of "completing and dedicating to the worship of god our new church building." The Messenger was apparently a church publication begun by Jenkins the year before.11 It is probably our first church newsletter. Finding a whole copy of the original publication from which the clipping on Mr. Blount came would be a real treasure for the church. An even more valuable issue would be one describing the first use of the church.

On January 6, 1907, we appointed a three-man committee to collect pledges for "our New Church." That same month we took delivery on a new pipe organ for the church, valued at three thousand dollars.¹² All this would indicate that the move into the new sanctuary was in December 1906.

The sanctuary was a modified example of the Akron plan of church design. This featured a central rotunda with pews arranged in a semicircle around the pulpit area, cut by two aisles. There were areas to the sides that could be separated from the main sanctuary by folding doors to form Sunday School classrooms. This plan was first used for First Methodist Episcopal Church of Akron, Ohio, in 1869, but the design became popular and was used by thousands of churches built between then and World War I. It was a usefully flexible plan for churches that were becoming increasingly institutional, with church offices, kitchens, and classes for Sunday Schools and other groups. A church was no longer a simple space for worship. We would have to wait for a kitchen, but we had an office with telephone in this new building. We

^{11.} The *BR* of January 3, 1906, tells us that Jenkins "is putting out a bright paper. It is full of his own vim and go." By coincidence, its name, *The Messenger*, is the same as our current newsletter.

^{12.} BR, January 16, 1907. The church records never mention this.



First Baptist Church at Pine and Nash (J. Robert Boykin, III)

had electricity, too. Metered rates were 0.75 cents per hour for five to forty 16-candlepower bulbs. ¹³ Over time some people came to sit in the same pew each service and sort of considered it their place. Some bought cushions, and you weren't supposed to sit on them if they weren't yours!

There is an undated note from 1908 that it was "absolutely necessary to put a new roof on the parsonage" and that it would cost about \$150. The roof was likely of sheet metal and might have been expected to last more than fourteen years. Members were requested to subscribe for the month of August double the amount usually given for the pastor's salary and church expenses.

These were interesting years for home life. In 1907 W. H. Hoover felt that his leather and harness goods company didn't have much longer to live, so he bought the patent for the first practical vacuum cleaner, and soon developed it into a household fixture. In 1908 the Boy Scouts were founded, Mother's Day was observed for the first time, the first Model T came off the Ford assembly line, the Wilson Tobs played their first game, and the Chicago Cubs won the World Series. Popular songs of the day were "Shine On, Harvest Moon," "I Wonder Who's Kissing Her Now," and "Let Me Call You Sweetheart."

At the first meeting of 1908, on January 8, Brother Briggs reported that

^{13.} Printed schedule of rates in the Pleasant Daniel Gold Papers, folder 6, Southern Historical Collection. The schedule is undated, but it would be roughly contemporary.

the Finance Committee had very little money on hand. A committee of ten, divided into five two-person teams, each a man and a woman, was appointed to go out visiting their wards and securing pledges for the support of the church for the coming year. Each member was given a copy of the church roll, with instruction to make any needed corrections, and to record the street address of each member. This implies that the church or someone in the church, perhaps the pastor, had a typewriter. (The clerk, T. F. Pettus, was using a typewriter as early as 1910 to write or ask for letters of dismission, but the typewriter may have been at his place of business.) There is a carbon copy of a "First Baptist Church roll" typed on two onionskin pages, inserted into the ledger containing the minutes for 1907–1911. Among the members are Mr. and Mrs. J. T. Jenkins and their oldest daughters, Gladys and Grace. We may assume this is the roll prepared after the January 8 meeting.

In May 1908 the Southern Baptist Convention met in Hot Springs, Arkansas. North Carolina was well represented: thirty people from this state attended!¹⁴

Something controversial went on in 1908. Between the meeting about the pastor's roof (undated, but it would have been after February 5, 1908, the date of the previous meeting) and the meeting of October 7, there is a gap in the records: ten pages (43–52) have been cut out. Ten pages is an extraordinary amount of space to cover a few months, but something happened that caused someone or some people enough discomfort later that they took it on themselves to remove some sensitive material. Sometime in those months the church changed its name. In the minutes of the next recorded meeting, October 7, 1908, we refer to ourselves not as the Wilson Baptist Church but as First Baptist Church. Yet no other church seems to have been formed.

The Tar River Association, to which we had always belonged, spun off the Roanoke Association, and our area was part of the new group. Its first meeting was in the fall of 1908, and at the October meeting we selected seven men and five ladies to be our representatives at its first meeting in Rocky Mount. Our pastor Jenkins was the featured preacher at that meeting. In 1955 the Roanoke Association itself would undergo mitosis, and we would become, as we are still, part of the South Roanoke Association.

The first meeting of 1909, January 6, elected officers for the new year. Among them was Robert E. Hagan as Sunday School superintendent and Mrs. R. E. Hagan as financial secretary. A later hand has underlined in pencil the words "R. E. Hagan, Supt." and drawn a large arrow in the margin pointing to the name. We will hear more about Mr. Hagan later.

Something happened in the spring of 1909, too. It is hard to believe it was not fallout from whatever happened in 1908. This time we can tell what hap-

^{14.} BR, May 20, 1908.

pened, but still not why, not what it was all about. Sometime, exactly when we don't know (although it was reported in the Biblical Recorder of June 9. 1909), the church withdrew fellowship from some of our members, who then sought membership in the church at Scotland Neck. Under the leadership of Dr. J. D. Hufham, the "Baptist bishop," they were organized into "a branch of the Scotland Neck Baptist Church meeting in Wilson." Among them were prominent people. Elected as deacons of the new congregation were T. F. Pettus, W. N. Morse, B. F. Briggs, and C. E. Blount. T. F. Pettus was elected the clerk. These men had been important figures in the Wilson church. Families were of course involved. This was a really big rupture. If we knew the names of the exiles, we would have more insight, but unfortunately the Scotland Neck church does not have records from the period. It sounds for all the world like a congregation-wide political conflict over leadership. There may have been pro-Jenkins and anti-Jenkins people. Perhaps it was generational: the old stalwarts against the flood of newcomers. If so, it looks like the old stalwarts were the ones ousted. It is hard to believe that the pastor was not in some way part of the problem.

Though the months of February through October 1908 are cut from the record book, the *Biblical Recorder* remembers our having two guest preachers during this period, either one of whom could have been controversial. On March 4 our guest was A. C. Dixon, a native Tar Heel educated at Wake Forest and at Southern Seminary in Louisville. Early on he began identifying himself with extremely conservative causes, including premillennial dispensationalism, something quite alien to Southern Baptists of the time. ¹⁵ It is not at all unlikely that his visit could have stirred up doctrinal controversy. At the time, Dixon was pastor of Dwight Moody's church in Chicago. We had a revival beginning March 18 featuring Virginia evangelist Percy G. Elsom, of whom not much is known. It is certainly not unheard-of for a visiting preacher to inject controversial ideas into a congregation, leaving it to struggle with those ideas. This could have happened with us; Pastor Jenkins, a man without much education, may have had to deal with the fallout, and

^{15.} *BR*, March 4, 11, 18, 1908. A. C. Dixon was the brother of Thomas Dixon, author of *The Clansman*, the 1905 novel glorifying the Ku Klux Klan, and basis of the film *Birth of a Nation*. Premillennial dispensationalism, with its innovative idea of a "rapture," was the brainchild of John Nelson Darby, an Englishman and a founder of the Plymouth Brethren, some of whom came to this country. (Garrison Keillor grew up among them.) C. I. Scofield attended some Darby lectures and was sold. His *Scofield Reference Bible* was published in 1909 and has been a foundation of certain fundamentalist thinking in the United States ever since. Educated Southern Baptists around 1900 would never have taken millennial references in Revelation literally, but these fairly modern ideas appeared in SBC controversies of the 1920s, and showed up again with strength in the 1980s.

he may have taken sides. From what little evidence there is, I would surmise that J. D. Hufham, the "Baptist bishop," eventually straightened things out and brought our congregation back together as First Baptist Church, even though there was no "Second Baptist" until a bit later.

At the next meeting, July 7, 1909, two things happened. The big order of business was that Pastor Jenkins submitted his resignation, to take effect the coming Sunday, July 11. A committee was appointed to draft "suitable resolutions" to be read at the morning service that day. Also, Mrs. Hagan resigned as financial secretary after serving six months. Between this meeting and the next, on December 29, another sheet (55–56) has been cut from the ledger.

The sudden resignation of the pastor—effective immediately, for all practical purposes—certainly raises questions. Yet since resolutions were to be read at his last morning service, it sounds like we were willing to give him a friendly send-off. Those resolutions would certainly be of interest, but if they were recorded, they were cut out. It is worth mentioning that in the margin of the July 7 meeting, a later hand has written in large script in blue pencil: "7-7-09—J. T. Jenkins—Resigns." For some reason someone wanted to call loud attention to it. It is hard to avoid the conclusion that Jenkins's ministry had been divisive, almost resulting in a permanent split. From looking over the *Biblical Recorder* for these years at the number of revivals he was holding, it is reasonable to assume that many Wilson people thought the pastor was spending entirely too much time away from the church. There may have been some reason we know nothing about. Since he did not immediately go on to another pastorate, in all probability he was asked to leave.

John T. Jenkins moved from Wilson to Charlotte. He was out of the ministry briefly, supporting his family by serving as editor of a publication called the *Christian Home*, according to Charlotte's City Directory for 1910. The census record for that year gives his occupation as minister but also editor of something, the name of which is partly illegible but which apparently ends with *Gospel*. (He had done some editorial work before. While he was in Morehead City he put out a paper called *The Evangelist*, and while in Waynesville he was an editor for the *Western North Carolina Baptist*.)

In April 1910 a man in Morristown, Tennessee, M. A. Goodson, addressed a letter to our church clerk asking after the whereabouts of the Rev. J. T. Jenkins. It was on the letterhead of a local law firm, but in the envelope of his own pork-packing company. The clerk, T. F. Pettus, simply replied: "Beg to advise that J. T. Jenkins left here last Summer, moved to Charlotte, North Carolina." 16

From Charlotte the Jenkins family moved to Lexington, North Carolina, where John was pastor from October 1910 until July 1912. He served two small

^{16.} Letters in church archives.

churches in the area at the same time. Mr. Jenkins apparently established himself as a well-regarded figure in Lexington. On June 16, 1912, the Junior Order held a special meeting in the church, and at that meeting he preached to a large audience. The local paper indicated that "Pastor Jenkins is in a way becoming a specialist at that sort of thing and his sermon was highly enjoyed by a large congregation."17 The Junior Order of United American Mechanics was not a youth organization, though it began as one. It was a semi-Masonic fraternal, patriotic order devoted to opposing (Catholic) immigration and promoting the reading of the Bible (Protestant King James Version) in public schools. The order still exists, though with smaller membership than a hundred years ago, and is today open to anyone of any religion, race, or age and of either sex. It operates a children's home in Lexington, North Carolina. 18 That *The Dispatch* singled him out as "a specialist in that sort of thing" would perhaps indicate an interest in patriotic or fraternal organizations. He himself was a Mason. His affinity for the Junior Order probably gives an indication of his political leanings.

On July 17, just a few weeks later, we are startled to read this in *The Dispatch*:

To use a trite expression, like a bolt from a clear sky came the announcement Sunday of the resignation of Rev. J. T. Jenkins, for the past two years the popular pastor of the First Baptist Church. Hardly a member of his congregation had had an inkling of the matter and there was breathless surprise when he made the announcement Sunday morning. He has been pastor of the churches at Reeds and Southmont and has tendered his resignation to both of those congregations. Pastor Jenkins has not yet announced what he will do. According to his announcement Sunday morning his resignation is to be effective at any time the church sees fit between now and the second Sunday in August, at which time he will cease to be pastor. Mr. Jenkins has made a wonderful record here and everybody regrets his desire to leave. He found the church here in a bad row of stumps financially, with an uncompleted auditorium on its hands and a big debt. He has completed the auditorium at an expense of \$4000 to \$5000 and at the same time cut the indebtedness more than \$3000. The best wishes of every member of his congregation

^{17. [}Lexington] Dispatch, June 12 and June 19, 1912.

^{18.} Whalen, *Handbook of Secret Organizations*, 74–75. There was a chapter in Wilson. C. C. Crittenden mentions it a letter to his brother, October 14, 1898, in the Crittenden Papers at the North Carolina State Archives.

and of every citizen of Lexington will follow him in any field to which he is called.

Smart people do not quit a job without having another one lined up. The oral tradition is that Pastor Jenkins was writing some letters to church members there in Lexington and, while at it, wrote a letter to a lady friend and put it in the wrong envelope. For whatever it's worth, J. Robert Boykin III of Wilson possesses a postcard picturing a portion of the architect's rendering of the church and the handwritten message "First Bap. Church, Wilson, N.C. Love, JTJ." There was only one JTJ in the church. The card, postmarked November 9, 1906, is addressed to a twenty-year-old single woman in Enfield, where Jenkins had held a revival in May. She may have been working at the post office there; that's what she was doing four years later. In 1930 she was living with a cousin in South Carolina, but eventually she returned to Enfield, where she was living when, never having married, she died in January 1957. Perhaps there is an innocent explanation, but Jenkins is not known to have had any family connections in that part of the state. It is interesting that Jenkins's name (as well as Douglass's) is conspicuously absent from a list of pastors given in the historical article in the WDT for July 26, 1921. The writer says that we had as pastors "some of the best the denomination afforded and a few like Jehoram, King of Judea, 'who departed without being desired'" (2 Chronicles 21:20). Mr. Jenkins must have been among the latter.

Jenkins had connections with Baptists in Missouri, so he moved up to Kansas City. From there he did some evangelistic work; he was known in the local Blue River Association. He made his living, however, in journalism, founding and editing a local paper, the *Kansas City Free-Mason*, which apparently provided him with an income for the rest of his life. He had joined the local Masonic lodge in 1913, transferring from the lodge at Lexington. In all likelihood one of his subscribers was the young Harry Truman, though the Truman Library in Independence cannot verify it. He surely remained in close contact with local Baptists, given that his office was in the Western Baptist Publishing Company Building. Jenkins suffered a stroke on September 20, 1933, and died of a heart attack at home on November 6. It must have been unexpected; he had paid his semi-annual dues to the Masons only a few days before his death. The editor of the *Word and Way* (the Missouri state Baptist paper), who was a friend of John's, wrote a brief but tender obituary for the November 16, 1933, issue of the journal.

We cannot leave this matter without further reflection. Jenkins's story is not unique. This kind of thing has happened among Christians as long as there have been Christians, and will continue, since Christians continue to

^{19.} Records of the Grand Masonic Lodge of Missouri.

be human beings. Several things can be said. First, we not only do not know what Jenkins did; we don't even know that he did anything morally wrong in Lexington. Or that he was ever publicly accused of anything. We only know that something put him in an embarrassing situation in which he felt that the easiest way out was resignation. As with our charter member Dr. Bullock, who was dismissed from the Confederate army for being an incompetent discontent, we do not know his side of the story. Just as Bullock may have been conducting himself with integrity, so might Mr. Jennings. The pastorate occasionally brings people together in circumstances that appear morally ambiguous to others but might seem innocent to the parties involved, however unwise or even foolish they may be.

Second, Jenkins had a friend who took him in, as often happens in these situations, and even if John was guilty of unethical behavior and the friend knew it, this was a gracious, commendable act. The friend was Sanford Brown, the founder and first editor of the *Word and Way*, an old childhood friend from the North Carolina mountains who had been ordained by the same minister who ordained Jenkins. Brown knew that Jenkins had a gift for preaching and evangelism, and tried to keep it in use.²⁰ Fannie Jenkins never left her husband. Of course, that was not the viable option that it would be today, and the marriage may have been strained. But she died in 1947 in the same home, and was buried in the same cemetery, presumably beside him. She may have been living there with a daughter named Gladys, who never married and who died in Kansas City in 1980.

Third, whatever misdeed or act of misjudgment derailed Jenkins's ministry, it neither undid the good he had already done nor prevented him from doing good in the future. Way back in the fourth and fifth centuries Christians had a fight over the issue of whether the sinfulness and unworthiness of a minister affected the validity of his work. The Church decided that it did not, since God was the one at work and God always works through sinful humanity. The intent was not to excuse a priest for sinful actions but to enable the work of the Church to continue in spite of its own sinfulness. The situation of the ancient church, with its sacramental theology, is not the same situation that confronts a Baptist congregation when a minister behaves in a way it finds unseemly, and a Baptist church may decide it cannot continue to accept this person's leadership. Yet how such situations are handled may be determined by how seriously we take the possibility of redemption. The controversy in the ancient church involved a group called the Donatists, if anyone wants to pursue it. The great theologian Augustine defined what would become the orthodox position.

Chapter 16

Traction

1909–1912 (James M. Dunaway, Charles Wayne Blanchard)

Then away with all malice and deceit, away with all pretence and jealousy and recrimination of every kind!

—1 PETER 2:1 NEB

DO NOT REMEMBER MEETING Miss Lucy Culpepper, but surely I did. When I joined FBC in 1965 Miss Culpepper was still living; she died July 25, 1971. She was seventy-nine then, which means she had lived through almost three-quarters of the church's history when she left us. Six feet tall, she was one of those characters that every church has and whose memory is cherished. One longtime member remembers Miss Lucy angrily ripping out of a Bible a page that had a certain pastor's name written on it, because she said he had been carrying on with the organist. Lucy was the daughter of Cicero and Margaret Lancaster Culpepper, who had long been church leaders. Miss Lancaster had been born in Wilson in 1860. Cicero came to Wilson from Nash County, where he had worked on a farm. Here he opened a wheelwright's shop. The couple married in 1885, and that's when Cicero joined us, coming for baptism on May 17, 1885, while "Mr. Mac" was our pastor. Cicero died in October 1943, and his wife Maggie in March 1947. Maggie Lancaster Culpepper was the last surviving member of the large group of people who joined Wilson Baptist during that long protracted meeting conducted by F. M. Jordan in May 1878. She had been eighteen at the time.

In 1960, when we celebrated our centennial, Miss Lucy was one of a committee of four that prepared a brief history of the church. The others were

Naomi Morris, Inza (Mrs. Erick) Bell, and Pastor Clyde Baucom. Their work appeared in the *Wilson Daily Times* and was reprinted in 1995 in the 135th Anniversary Memory Booklet prepared by Frances Moore. Their spadework has been a valuable help in preparing this history.

I bring up Miss Lucy because she was a personal witness to some of the history that has been sliced out of our memory by razor blades. Born in September 1891 and received into the church January 22, 1905, she would have been baptized by Pastor Jenkins, right during the period for which we lack sources. That makes her old enough (fourteen at baptism) to qualify as a witness. There are some data in the 1960 history for which I can find no verification and which may well be based solely on Miss Lucy's memory. I will treat her recollections as a reliable source. She was just a kid when J. J. Douglass was our pastor, but she may have remembered the name even though he seems to have disappeared from the written record. Though his name never appears in the records now, he was definitely here during the time the 1960 history says he was.

The earlier history says that there was a split in the church in 1910, that members were later reinstated, and that the minutes of the discordant months were then cut out and destroyed. But as we saw in the last chapter, it's a bit more complicated than that. The missing pages cover several months in 1908, not 1910, but something serious happened in 1909 that we do know of, and it does indeed sound like a split in the church: somewhere during those months we renamed ourselves after that most famous of ordinal numbers, presumably to distinguish ourselves from some other church, perhaps the exiles forming the "branch" of the Scotland Neck church in Wilson. In 1915 we would be active in the formation of what was then called Second Baptist Church, later called Five Points. The fact that a new congregation in 1915 could call itself Second is good evidence that no new church originated from any split in 1908. The 1960 history says that the members who split off in 1910 were reinstated. This surely happened, but there is no record of it. The most logical conclusion is that Lucy Culpepper remembered the argument that took place in 1909 when the records were cut out and when dissenters may well have been reinstated, but mistook the year, stating it as 1910, when there is statistical evidence that a large number of members left. We submitted no report at all to the associational meeting in 1910, but at the associational meeting of 1911 we reported a membership of 289. That's a loss of 75 members. Many of them must have gone out to New Hope. Between 1909 and 1911 New Hope reported a gain of 39 members. Elm City reported a gain between 1911 and 1912 of almost 60 members. There were no other missionary Baptist churches in Wilson County. Yet it's obvious that by 1911 we had lost 20 percent of our membership. Some families would have had automobiles by that time, and attending a church at some distance from one's home

would have been feasible. It would be 1918 before our own membership recovered to the point that we had reported in 1909.

The records resume with December 29, 1909, with T. F. Pettus as clerk. A whole roster of officers for the coming year is listed in the book.

Sunday School superintendent: O. D. Stanley

Ass't superintendent: W. M. Moss Sunday School secretary: E. B. Moss

Ass't secretary: D. B. Gaskins

Sunday School organist: Miss Cora Taylor Ass't S. S. organist: Miss Alice Privette

Church clerk: T. F. Pettus

Church organist: Mrs. J. J. Privette

Ushers: A. B. Carroll, Ch.; R. L. Rice, J. B. Barnes, Otway Moss,

J. D. Taylor, A. T. Strickland, George [illegible]

To Take the Offering: R. A. Turlington, Chm.; J. A. Sykes, A. D. McGowan, W. J. Burden, P. P. Dickinson, A. A. Privette

Attached to the roster is the recommendation "that we enter upon the duties of the new year, forgetting the past, uniting our forces, and resolving by the help of God to work harder, pray more and be more faithful to our church and striving to make this [1910] the very best year in all our history."

No attempt is made in this book to record the constant flow of church officers. These are given at this point simply to indicate the state of the church organization at the time. The fact that we had a committee of ushers suggests that we had substantial numbers of people for services, as well as a certain degree of formality and decorum.

At this meeting a request was made that the pastor, now James M. Dunaway, preach on missions the first Sunday in January. Apparently this was the J. M. Dunaway named in the associational report of 1909. His call to the church would have been recorded on page 55 or 56 of the record book, the sheet that has been cut out. We can only suspect that some personal unpleasantness was involved. We had several obstreperous members, and whatever problem we had at this point may center around any one of them.

On January 27, 1910, the church clerk addresses a short, curt summons to Mr. R. E. Hagan, whom we met in the last chapter.

Dear Sir:

There will be a meeting of the Finance Committee of the First Baptist Church, in the Pastor's study, in the Parsonage, at 7:30 P.M. Friday night the 28th of January. You are urged to attend.

The pastor at the time, who would have had to deal with this matter, would have been Mr. Dunaway. In her reminiscences of early years written for the

1995 booklet, Annie Roval Farmer mentioned arriving in 1904 when Mr. Jenkins was pastor, and recalls that Mr. Dunaway followed him. Although the record book lacks the page telling of his call, we have a copy of the letter written him inviting here. Dated July 29, 1909, we offer him a salary of twelve hundred dollars a year with a month's vacation (we normally offered the vacation) and the use of the parsonage. The clerk writes, "The Church is a unit in this matter and outside forces are rejoicing that [the] Church has taken this course." Brother Dunaway certainly did not stay long. He submitted his resignation on March 6, 1910, to take effect at the end of the month. He gave declining health as a reason, saying he needed to move to a higher, drier climate. His typed resignation letter (which is in the church archives) contains an ambiguous paragraph: "It is possible that some have not understood me, but they will realize some day that I was their friend. I make no claim to infallibility: all of us make mistakes. I have done what I thought was right and I have done my best. I regret more than I can tell you that I have not been able to do more and a better work. If I could have health and remain here I believe we would build up a great church." Later in the same letter, "As yet I have no plans and do not know what I will do. My mind is made up to do all in my power to regain my health, and it may be that I shall give up active work for a vear."

T. F. Pettus, the church clerk and one of the Scotland Neck exiles, wrote a man in the church at Wilkesboro on March 21, 1911, knowing that church was seeking a pastor:

I desire to recommend a good man for you, Mr. J. M. Dunnaway [sic], he is now located in Lumber Bridge, N.C. He served this church immediately after it had passed through the most trying ordeal in its history, which left it a divided church, his pastorate here was appreciated highly and he resigned and left very much against our wishes, but he thought another could come in here and do better for this church under its existing conditions at that time. He is a good, consecrated, well educated man, a good pastor and a good mixer, he will make friends with everybody in your town. He was liked and loved here by the people generally, regardless of denomination. We consider him an exceptionally good man and hope and expect to have him serve us here again some day as pastor of our church.²¹

There was yet another complication in or about the year 1910. There was a twenty-nine-year-old pastor at New Hope named William Marvin Huggins (known as "Willie"), who lived in Wilson and made a living as baggage master at the depot. In 1914 he was in New Bern, apparently his hometown,

wishing to be appointed an associational missionary. The problem was that Livingstone Johnston, the general secretary of the state Baptist convention, was aware of some bad blood between Mr. Huggins and FBC of Wilson. Two letters are addressed to our church on the same day, March 5, 1914, on the letterhead of Tabernacle Baptist Church of New Bern. Mr. Huggins himself writes:

Mr. Livingston Johnson says he cannot place me until you brethren are agreeable to it as you feel that I was imprudent while living in Wilson and pastor at New Hope.

Brethren, I wish to say that I was green and inexperienced while in your midst and might have done things that grieved you and also that grieved my Lord but I assure you that I never intended to do so.... I beg you to forgive me as I feel that God is with me and desires to use me.

His pastor, J. B. Phillips, writes:

Brethren, I know something of the blunders and mistakes of a high-spirited, inexperienced young preacher and feel that we have to bear and forbear a great deal with them. Our church does not try in any way to exonerate Brother Huggins from any errors or mistakes but we beg you to deal gently with him and if possible to forgive him the past and write a good letter to Dr. Johnson so that he will feel free to give our brother work.²²

Our clerk, T. F. Pettus, replies succinctly but correctly, with copies to Mr. Johnston in Raleigh and Mr. Phillips in New Bern:

I am instructed by the board to express their willingness to forgive any personal offenses you may have committed toward this Church but at the same time the Board [of Deacons] declines to make any recommendation.

22. Letters in the church archives. I do not know whether Huggins got his appointment, but in 1917 he was pastor of a church in Autryville, and he was still there in 1920. Over the next years he served a long succession of little rural churches, none of them for very long. In 1930 he and his family were back in New Bern, and he gave his occupation as "clergyman" to the census. However, he died August 1930 in Raleigh, as an "inmate" at the North Carolina Hospital for the Insane (later Dorothea Dix). He had been there three weeks. He died of pellagra, a niacin deficiency, which was an endemic plague in the impoverished rural South of the first decades of the twentieth century. Dementia was the last stage of the disease before death. His family, presumably eating the same diet, does not seem to have suffered, and relations within the family seem to have been good. His funeral was in New Bern, conducted by the pastors of Tabernacle and First Baptist Churches.

When you consider the problems caused by Mr. Thompson at New Hope, and Mr. Huggins who was at New Hope, and Mr. Hagan the member with a claim against us, and whatever problems the presence or absence of Pastor Jenkins caused, and the spin-off of some members temporarily into the church at Scotland Neck, it's a wonder that the church ever came back together.

Dunaway was a native Virginian born April 24, 1857.²³ As a young man he had a terrifying experience in which he nearly drowned, and as a result of this he made a profession of faith and devoted himself to the ministry, graduating from Crozer Theological Seminary in 1888. He served several churches in Virginia before coming to North Carolina. He was pastor at Spencer before coming to Wilson. He and his wife Alice and son James W., about nineteen at the time, joined us October 29, 1909. We gave them letters of dismission on March 27, 1910. He did go to higher ground—North Wilkesboro, where he stayed until 1913—so Mr. Pettus's letter must have succeeded. Dunaway wrote to the Religious Herald when he prepared to go to Cape Charles, Virginia, as pastor, "The Baptists of [North Carolina] are thoroughly loyal Baptists, and any day or night they can be rallied to shouting or fighting pitch, for that matter, if you will hold up before them Wake Forest, Meredith, or the Orphanage."24 He seems to have held dual pastorates in Cape Charles and nearby Cheriton. He may have given up the duties at Cape Charles in 1919. He retired from Cheriton on January 1, 1922. The people there had just completed a fine new building, and it was packed on his last Sunday. The pastors of the Presbyterian and Methodist churches were in attendance, so apparently everyone gathered at the Baptist Church for the occasion. Dunaway had been in bad health for some time. He had consulted with doctors in Baltimore in the fall of 1920, and they told him his illness was fatal. When he left his church he went to the home of his brother, pastor of the Baptist church in nearby Accomac, where he died in late April. Obituaries listed among survivors his wife, Alice, and two sons, James W. and Ralph, born after 1900. In the 1900 census there was an infant named Alice, who must have died young.

It is clear from the obituaries and from the resolution passed by the Cheriton church after his retirement but before his death, that Dunaway was

^{23.} The 1900 census, when the family was in Marion, Virginia, has the year of his birth as 1861 and his age as thirty-nine. But he died in 1922, and obituaries in both the *Religious Herald* (May 4, 1922) and the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* (April 28, 1922) indicate that he was just a few days past his sixty-fifth birthday. I'm inclined to go with the newspapers.

^{24.} Undated clipping from the *Religious Herald*, also quoted in Taylor's *Virginia Baptist Ministers*, 6th series, 115–117.

greatly loved and appreciated by his people, as were his whole family. He landed among us right in the middle of that troublous time we went through, and friction in the congregation was surely a good part of his decision to move to higher, drier ground. Those Virginia churches he served toward the end of his life are on the Eastern Shore, not where you'd go to get drier or higher. He didn't even stay here long enough to experience one of our delightful Wilson summers. But there's little doubt he was a sick man, so let's give him, and ourselves, the benefit of the doubt. If he felt death impending as early as 1913, he may have gone to the shore to be close to his brother and his family in case of need. James Manning Dunaway (he appears to have gone by Manning) was from a family full of preachers, but he was the first to have a theological education.

We sure didn't lose any time finding a replacement. At the same meeting where Dunaway submitted his resignation, we appointed a search committee, but Bro. O. D. Stanley stood up in the meeting and moved that we immediately—by wire!—call as pastor C. W. Blanchard of Manning, South Carolina, 25 who had filled our pulpit on February 20. We learn from a letter Mr. Pettus wrote March 11, 1911, to F. B. Hendren at Wilkesboro that Mr. Dunaway had recommended Blanchard to our church.26 Blanchard must have made quite an impression at the time, because every one of the forty-one people at the meeting rose in unanimous support of the motion. We decided to offer him twelve hundred dollars plus parsonage and then discharged the newly appointed pulpit committee. He was away from home when the telegram arrived, but he answered in a letter of March 7 that he would give the matter "calm consideration," saying that he had offers from two other churches. The man took us up on it, though there were a couple of snags. In a letter of March 14, 1910, he expressed doubt that he would be able to live on eight hundred dollars less than what he was then making. If we raised the offer, there is no record of it. There was a problem with the parsonage. First, it was not clear that Dunaway could move out by April 10. Blanchard wrote us on March 17 that he did not wish to inconvenience "Dr. Dunaway" and said: "He must not inconvenience himself to move for my entrance before he secures a place." Second, he called attention to the fact that the parsonage was not in good shape. He asked that the upper floor be replastered and painted. Things must have worked out. On Sunday, March 27, we granted letters to James M. and Alice B. Dunaway to join "any Baptist church of same faith," which means he had no particular place to go. The Blanchards moved into the par-

^{25.} He was the first pastor of what is now Clarendon Baptist Church. In 1910 it moved a few miles up the road to Alcolu, now just on the other side of I-95 from Manning.

^{26.} Letter in church archives.



Charles W. Blanchard (Holland, The Baptist Bride, image courtesy of North Carolina Baptist Collection, Z. Smith Reynolds Library, Wake Forest University)

sonage on Thursday, March 31, and he started work the next day. Blanchard's letters are handwritten with a large, energetic, confident hand.²⁷ It seems Mr. Dunaway's intuition was right: C. W. Blanchard could do this job if anyone could. A timid soul would never have undertaken it.

Charles Wayne Blanchard was fiftyone when he came to us along with his
wife Juliet and four children: Edna and
Charles W., children of Charles's first
wife Virginia Johnson; and William C.
and John C. Duffy, Juliet's sons by her
first husband. Edna and John C. joined
First Baptist by letter at the same time
as the parents, April 24, 1910. Blanchard
was born in Wake County February 11,
1859. He was well into his twenties when
he felt a call to the ministry. He entered

Wake Forest College at the advanced age of twenty-nine, more unusual then than now. When he left the college, President Taylor of WFC hired him as a fund-raiser, a job he handled very well. He was on the road quite a bit, but during that time he was pastor of First Baptist in the little Wake County village called Cary. He was there from 1892 to 1896, when he went to Kinston. His first wife died in 1904. In 1907–1908 he was editor and business manager of the *Biblical Recorder*. After leaving the *BR* he went to Manning, South Carolina, where he didn't stay very long before getting our telegram inviting him to Wilson.

On Thursday, March 12, B. F. Briggs died at age seventy-three. He had joined up way back in 1878 and had been a deacon for twenty-four years. He had been in the Fifty-fifth North Carolina Infantry during the Civil War, had been sheriff of Wilson County, and had sold fire and life insurance and operated the Briggs Hotel, the facilities of which he made available for church functions. His passing is not mentioned in the church records, but our membership was large enough by this time that deaths—even exceptional ones—often went unmentioned.²⁸

After the morning service on May 15, we had a business meeting with quite a lot on our plate. One minor item was that Mrs. G. W. Blount rejoined

^{27.} These are in the church archives.

^{28.} Wilson Times, May 13, 1910. A memorial adopted by the Masons on May 12 was published in the May 20 issue of the *Times*.

the church, having left Wilson after the death of her husband and gone to live with the daughter in Hickory. Another thing had to do with the condition of the church building. The building went up in 1906, but it did not last as long as it should have. Already in 1910 there were complaints about the condition of the pews, so we authorized the deacons to employ an attorney, O. P. Dickinson, "to investigate the matter of final settlement for the seats in the new church and advise action particularly as to their unsatisfactory condition, this condition having existed ever since the seats were put in." Jumping ahead a bit, Frances Carlton tells a funny story about a wedding she attended in June 1952. The pews had wide cracks, and her nice dress got caught in one when the congregation stood for the bride's entrance. Her dress ripped. Mrs. Baucom, the pastor's wife, was seated next to her and lent her the widebrimmed hat she was wearing to hold over it until she got to the car after the wedding. She was there with her fiancé, Hilton, but they skipped out on the reception. The pew problem went back to the beginning.

In July we found we didn't have enough money to pay our insurance, and a special collection was taken up. It still wasn't enough, so Kinchen H. Watson, proprietor of a successful tobacco warehouse, was appointed a committee of one to scare up the rest. Our September 7, 1910, meeting was busy. We decided that Pastor Blanchard should be moderator for all business meetings. Also, a rather startling action was taken: the financial secretary was asked to make up a list of the membership, showing how much each had pledged and how much they had given, and actually to read it aloud at each quarterly business meeting! There was also a rather nasty bit of business: we accepted a committee report regarding a disagreement with Robert E. Hagan.

A committee consisting of brethren Watson & McGowan, appointed by the Board of Deacons and Finance Committee, were empowered to make full settlement of established claims against the Church by R. E. Hagan. A check for \$38.61 was presented by said committee, the same covering the full amount of all established claims against the Church, which was refused by Mr. Hagan. As a further effort to settle said claim and satisfy Mr. Hagan the same committee on request of the board of Deacons & Finance committee notified Mr. Hagan to meet with them at their regular session Tuesday evening Sep. 6, 1910. Said committee report a flat refusal on the part of Mr. Hagan to meet with said Boards on such business.

In the estimation of this committee we have satisfied every moral claim against the church in an honest endeavor to fully and satisfactorily pay this debt and therefore do not further esteem ourselves under obligation in this matter.

W. M. Moss. Secty. Pro Tem.

In the margin someone has penciled in: "He presented [an account] for \$1166.27." Whoever did this must have had precise information from some source I have not been able to find. Perhaps it is Lucy Culpepper's hand, perhaps Pastor Baucom's, or maybe (more likely) someone contemporary with the event. Mr. Hagan had evidently performed some service for which he thought he had not been properly paid. He was in the roofing business, slate and metal. He worked with sheet metal, cornices for buildings, that sort of thing. Was this an argument over repairs to the roofing of the parsonage? Did he perhaps do the roofing for the new building, which had been leaking? People today remember the old sanctuary at Pine and Nash as notoriously leaky. As a matter of fact, the leakage would do such damage that only forty years after the construction of the church, in 1946, the city of Wilson condemned the property. That's for a later chapter, but we can only wonder if Mr. Hagan was behind the problem. We have not heard the last of him.

Probably also reflecting tension in the church is that on October 5 the clerk (Thomas F. Pettus) was asked to prepare the church letter for the associational meeting later in the month. This is a statistical report on membership, finances, and other matters that is annually made to the association and published as part of the annual associational report. On October 9 after the evening service, there was a called business meeting at which the letter was adopted, and the minutes read, "a copy of which is shown below." It is not there. The rest of the page of the ledger, over half the space, is simply blank, as if Mr. Pettus intended to go back and record the letter, but this is the year that the church made no report at all to the Roanoke Association. It was between 1909 and 1911 that we lost so many members. Yet the church records show that new members were steadily joining.

In November Willard M. Moss reported that we owed about \$3,500 on the church, and the deacons sought to pay it off by getting pledges, half of which would be in immediate cash, and the balance payable in ten monthly installments. The financial management of church affairs is beginning to show some signs of order. On Thanksgiving Day we had a guest speaker, Dr. Isaac M. Mercer, of Rocky Mount. We will hear much more of him later. He assisted us in ordaining some new deacons: R. A. Turlington, A. D. McGowan, J. A. Sykes, and D. B. Gaskins.

In January 1911 we made our first move toward advertising the church and its services. We set aside five dollars a month for "suitable methods of advertising." Pastor Blanchard and Charles Scarratt, a local merchant, were in charge. Charles and his wife had joined only the last August, so he must have had some connections that made him a logical choice for this responsibility.

^{29.} In 2007 dollars, \$1,166 would be about \$26,600, and \$38 would amount to about \$880.

We hadn't withdrawn fellowship from anyone for a while, but in February E. R. Smith's "unchristian conduct" moved us to strike him from the roll. We wanted someone to do some missionary work on behalf of the church, and in March we hired Homer Dew, a twenty-seven-year-old single man working on a farm, to do this for forty dollars a month. As usual when special expenses came up, a committee was appointed to go out and raise the money. In April we decided Brother Blanchard was worth a nice raise in salary, so we upped it from twelve hundred dollars to fifteen hundred. It's clear we liked the man.

April 2, 1911, would mark Pastor Blanchard's first anniversary with us. In "Our Quarterly," as it is called on page 2, he comments on what had clearly been a trying year in the church. He writes in what amounts to a genuine pastoral letter:

We would do well to take into account that real advancement in the kingdom of Christ is not to be measured by apparent success. If one has had his own life brought nearer to God by his experiences . . . he has made real progress. It matters little what those experiences have been. . . . That our church has had a weird and strained experience is a fact we all know too well, but where no battle is waged, no victory is possible. Sin and its seductive power never yield without resistance. . . . So it often happens with the Church of Christ, the darkest hour is just before day. . . . Our year's labor together brings us cheering evidence of divine favor. The pastor finds its chiefest cause in the faithful co-operation he has found from his co-laborers. ... language fails in bespeaking the joy your labor and patient sufferings have given him during the year. We have had our difficulties, but we have rightly made them stepping-stones to achievement rather than millstones about our necks.

The pastor goes on to report a membership of 295 (much reduced from the 364 we reported to the association in October 1909). The Sunday School, however, has gained 145 pupils in the past year, so as now to count 320. Much of this is accounted for by the addition of adults to the Sunday School rolls. There were sixteen "training for diplomas in the art of teaching." Plans are made for a commencement exercise for the Sunday School in June. Blanchard speaks of a "revolution" in the "method and structural work of all departments of the church" and describes it as efficient. The most satisfaction is accorded the pastor by "a marked growth of spirituality among the member-

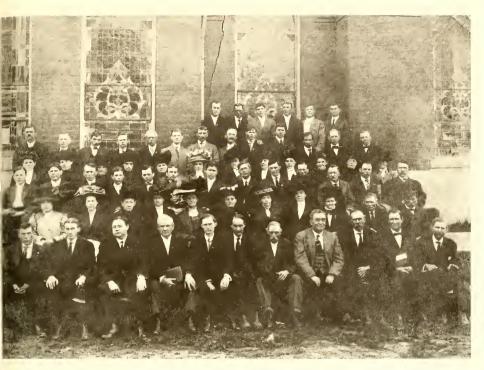
30. Frank Gilbreth and his wife Lillian had made the term "efficiency expert" known, and their work was widely studied and applied in business and industry.

ship of the church, a unifying of disaffected and indifferent elements, a better understanding and a more charitable spirit in the entire brotherhood." "Efficiency" was a buzzword in the business world of the day, and churches began adapting business models for their institutional life. A widely used 252-page guide to Sunday School procedures, *Efficiency in the Sunday School*, was published in 1912 by religious educator Henry Frederick Cope. Efficiency was on the mind of Wilson businessmen as they walked newly paved streets where the odor of horse manure was increasingly replaced by automobile exhaust and cigar smoke, the rattle of wagon wheels and clopping hooves replaced with hissing, sputtering autos, punctuating their journey with backfires.

The "weird and strained experience" the church went through during Mr. Blanchard's first year is left undescribed. After all, everyone knew what he was talking about, and he was writing for them, not us. It does seem that the problem dealt with personal relationships, not with doctrinal disputes. Paul's letters in the New Testament often contain references to church controversies that we can only guess at, for the same reason—the addressees knew what he was talking about. If Pastor Blanchard was part of the problem, he is willing to take blame: "Our mistakes [speaking of himself] have been many and our greatest trials have been incident to personal inability to render a more faultless service . . . but even our blunders have sometimes been made to serve Him." If he is telling the literal truth about the April 2 meeting, he may have considered his job on the line. He writes of "anniversary exercises" on that day and of being asked, immediately after the service, to excuse himself temporarily. Mr. Pettus mentions this in the minutes. Blanchard describes his feelings like this: "For the period of exile he mused of a block and an axe. It was so suggestive of an old-fashioned pastoral decapitation." He declares that he was greatly relieved to be ushered back in, only to be praised for his labors and to get a three-hundred-dollar raise.

We possess a treasure from 1911. A copy of volume 1, no. 3 (April 1911), of "Our Church Quarterly" survives. It may be a successor to Jenkins's *The Messenger*. On its front page is a large photo of the Boethia class (chapter 30), with Mr. Blanchard prominent on the first row, Bible in hand. It may not be by accident that this stray copy of the newsletter was preserved. It may have been kept as a record of a new beginning after a year of great trial. Mr. Blanchard is clearly optimistic about future prospects. Largely due to efforts of the women in the church, the debt on the organ has been paid off. Later in the paper there are instructions on using the new "duplex envelopes." They were to be distributed to the congregations in cartons, just as today, fifty-two to a box, and numbered, so that no one even had write their

They are the couple with all the children in the memoir *Cheaper by the Dozen*. In the movie version Clifton Webb played Frank.



hia Class, 1911. First row, fourth from left: Pastor C. W. Blanchard. Fourth from right: Charles A ell, Sr. Last on right: possibly Joe Joyner. Third row, sixth from left: A. J. Ford (Robert Boswell's dfather). (Sally and Robert Boswell)

name on the envelope. The envelope had a seal down the middle, dividing it into two sections. Members would put their weekly contributions to local church causes in one half, and donations for missions in the other. The pastor figured that if every member put a nickel in the envelope for missions each week, they could support a foreign missionary for a year. A dime would enable the support of two foreign missionaries and one city missionary. "Two cold drinks a week or one cigar represents the average needed for this great work."³¹

An upcoming revival beginning the last Sunday in April is played up in the newsletter, as well as Homer Dew's recent appointment for evangelistic work in and around Wilson. It is a temporary position, since he will be returning to his studies in September.

The paper lists our regular church services:

31. This was in 1911. It was in 1920 that Vice President Thomas R. Marshall said, "What this country needs is a good five-cent cigar." The price of cigars must have doubled in those nine years.

Sunday School, 9:45 A.M.
Preaching, 11 A.M. and 8 P.M.
Prayer meeting, Wednesday, 8 P.M.
Teachers' Meeting, Thursday, 8 P.M.
Monthly Conference, Wednesday after first Sunday, 8 P.M.
Deacons' Meeting, Tuesday after first Sunday, 8 P.M.
Woman's Missionary Society, Monday after third Sunday, 4 P.M.
Sunbeams, second and fourth Sundays, 4 P.M.
Royal Ambassadors, first and third Sundays, 4 P.M.

This is beginning to have a modern sound to it, and there are some interesting points. It is the first reference we have to Sunday School being held in the morning before church rather than on Sunday afternoon. The Sunday School is organized to the point that it can have teachers' meetings. This is the first reference to Sunbeams (for little children) or Royal Ambassadors (a boys' group). There is a reference in the paper to the reorganization of the Baraca class as a group for young men only (chapter 30). There was evidently a separate class for young women. The exclusion made here is of older persons, who would dominate a class of young men or women. There was a conscious effort here for there to be separate classes for young people, where they would not be intimidated by the opinions of their elders. This would have been horrifyingly unthinkable fifty years earlier.

As interesting as the content of the paper are the advertisements, many of which were placed by businesses run by church members. See W. C. Mayo for your hardware, guns, cutlery, and stoves. Moody, Carroll Co. provide "pure food and specialty groceries." They are in competition with Barnes-Graves Grocery, which offers quick delivery (call 335). C. B. Ruffin runs an "up-to-date café" with baked goods, ice cream, and cold drinks. Powell Brothers does steam cleaning, as does the Carolina Steam Laundry. Strickland & Lewis offer quick service and low prices, but don't say what their business is. L. S. Thompson sells insurance for Metropolitan Life, and in the ad he designates himself as superintendent (of the Sunday School). Privett & Company are jewelers. Williams & Co. are milliners. So are Luper & Riley. Charles Scarratt sells dress goods, novelties, and ready-to-wear clothing. Patterson Drug Company has two registered pharmacists. Turlington & Moore is a competing druggist, with a private prescription room. Allen T. Gay "sells it cheaper," but doesn't say what "it" is. And there is the venerable Wilson Hardware Company.

That four-page newsletter blazes with insight into the life of the congrega-

^{32.} The first Sunbeam Band was organized in 1886, but by this time the Southern Baptist Convention was promoting it. So also the RAs, which were begun in 1908.

tion in 1911, but the regular minutes for April 5 provides some of its own. We solemnly appointed a committee of two men—let their names be recorded for posterity: K. H. Watson and L. H. Winstead—to replace the electric light-bulbs that have burned out. That evening we also expelled a member, D. D. Nolley, after a report from the deacons that occupies a whole paragraph describing their repeated attempts to persuade the man to change his way of living. Yet he kept on with his drinking and with negligence of church duties (probably no more than attendance). The deacons felt it their duty to recommend withdrawal of fellowship from him. David Nolley, a bicycle repairman, and his wife Edna had joined us during the revival of March 1886. Expulsions from the membership were now rare and not perfunctory. This was probably a sad case.

The revival services drummed up in the newsletter were held from April 30 through May 11, with preaching by Fred N. Day of Winston-Salem. Day was a jeweler and optometrist in Winston who was ordained in 1907 and did evangelistic work for many years.³³ Ten people joined, three of them "under watchcare." This was a category of semi-membership. Sometimes it was for people who wanted to be active in the church but for some reason or another did not wish to move their membership, but more often (as at this time) it referred to people who joined without their letter physically in hand but fully expected to receive a letter in the mail upon request.

In May we had another unpleasant business meeting. J. R. Whitley, who had joined the church by baptism in February, was disfellowshipped for living in adultery and other un-Christian conduct. There must be a story there. Also, the saga of Robert E. Hagan continues. He appeared before this meeting and asked that his name be dropped from the roll on account of his being "out of harmony." We might remember that he had joined the church on statement, perhaps because the church he last attended was unwilling to grant him a letter as being in good standing. His request was granted. Mrs. Hagan did not leave the church. In June Fannie asked for her letter, and it was granted, but she apparently never actually moved her membership. She continued to be active until her death in 1935 at age seventy-six. Pastor Ellis conducted her funeral, and she was taken to her hometown of Huntingdon, West Virginia, for burial. Her husband remained in Wilson and died at age eighty-nine in 1938. There appears to have been no church service. The Masons saw to the funeral, and his remains were shipped to West Virginia to be laid beside his wife.

In September we dealt with a bill we owed the city of Wilson: \$138.90 for wiring the building for electricity. We simply paid it. That might not be remarkable except for the fact that it's the first time something like that has come up where we did not make a special collection or appoint a couple

of men as fund-raisers to go ask people for it. Evidently under Blanchard's leadership the financial bearings of the church were becoming more stable. At the same meeting we voted to adopt the use of individual cups at communion services. The Fountain Baptist Church must have heard about it, because they wrote us to see if we would sell them the communion set of two silver cups and pitcher we had been using. We gave it to them.

On October 10 our pastor's daughter Edna was married to Harry Lee Baucom in Wake County. Mr. Baucom was a fourth cousin once removed from our later pastor Clyde E. Baucom. That means they had a common great-great-great-grandfather. The relationship is so distant that Pastor Baucom probably never knew that he had a family connection to this Blanchard. We know that he went over the church records, and if he noticed the name of a relative, he left no remarks about it.

Beginning the last Sunday evening in September and going all the way through October 1911, Blanchard preached a series of sermons titled "The Sinner and His Difficulty in Finding Salvation." The topics of the sermons were printed on neat three-by-five cards with an invitation to come. They were probably left at homes and given out on the street. Those who attended were promised "short, snappy, practical sermons." This was still the Progressive era. The nation was on the move. Teddy Roosevelt would have appreciated short, snappy sermons, but it's hard to imagine this kind of thing appealing to William Hooper or any of our early pastors. Times had changed.

November 5, 1911, was a memorable day. Dr. Isaac Mercer came down from Rocky Mount to aid Pastor Blanchard in the ordination to the ministry of one of our own: Sidney Alonzo Edgerton. Sidney was born in South Carolina in 1887 and joined our church in 1899. He was educated at Buie's Creek Academy, Wake Forest College, and the Southern Baptist Seminary in Louisville. After ordination he began preaching around Wilson. He had probably finished Wake Forest at this time and was about to go on to Louisville. At some point he went to Fort Worth, Texas. In September 1914 he became ill and was hospitalized. On March 2, 1915, he wrote Mr. Pettus, the church clerk, to accept the enclosed letters of himself and his wife, which he had just received from Fort Worth. It isn't clear why and when he went to Texas, but he was writing from the North Carolina State Tubercular Sanatorium in Sanatorium, North Carolina (in Hoke County). He wrote that his financial resources were depleted after seven years of education and some months of treatment, and his letter left the impression that he would like the church at Wilson to give him some financial support, though he did not specifically ask for it.34 On March 5 we accepted the two-letters from the College

 $^{34. \} The \ typewritten \ letter \ and \ Mr.$ Pettus's typed reply are in the church archives.

Avenue Baptist Church in Fort Worth. Sidney was twenty-eight at the time. In January 1917 we granted him and Mrs. Edgerton letters to Buies Creek. He built a home there and pastored several small churches in Harnett County, including Lillington. He died suddenly at age thirty-five, while getting dressed to go to church at Neill's Creek, just out of Lillington, to conduct Easter Sunday services. He had a sinus infection, but he went into convulsions. His death was put down to a cerebral abscess. He left a wife and two children.³⁵

Sunday, November 12, 1911, was another big day. We had successfully raised the \$3,500 to retire the church's debt, and we held a ceremony after the morning service to burn the note and mortgage. This happy little ritual would be repeated May 1, 1960, when we re-



Sidney A. Edgerton (*A Light on the Hill: A Bicentennial History of Neill's Creek Missionary Baptist Church*, image courtesy of North Carolina Baptist Collection, *Z. Smith Reynolds Library*, Wake Forest University)

tired the debt on our present building. A week later we moved to participate with other churches in town in trying to persuade local businessmen to close their stores earlier on Saturday so that more people could make it to Sunday School and church the next day. Probably nothing came of it. Since 1903 Wilson had had strict blue laws against the sale of just about anything on Sunday. Hotels could sell cigars to travelers, but not to locals.³⁶

Bad news came in 1912. Word got around that Charles Blanchard had received a call from the Kinston Baptist Church, where he had held a pastorate earlier. On Sunday, March 10, we showed our support for our pastor by a standing vote. We wanted him to stay! On Sunday, March 31, however, he offered his resignation, to take effect May 1 or as soon thereafter as we could fill the vacancy. There were many expressions of regret. It was a sad occasion. There was a deacon ordination on March 13. Five were ordained (B. S. Garris, J. B. Barnes, A. B. Carroll, G. W. Grady, J. M. Daniel) in a service conducted by the pastor and Livingston Johnson from Raleigh. Johnson at the time was corresponding secretary (now called executive secretary) of the North Carolina Baptist State Convention and would edit the *Biblical Recorder* from 1917

^{35.} Butts, *A Light on the Hill*, 25; *BR*, April 25, 1923; death certificate. 36. Valentine, *Rise of a Southern Town*, 158–159.

to 1930. He had already served several churches as pastor, including Rocky

Down in Lucama, E. L. Green, who was with Lucama High School and who had joined us the year before, sent us a ten-dollar donation for the year. He begged forgiveness for his absence, but there was no Sunday train from Lucama.³⁷

Wednesday, April 3, was another bitter occasion. We withdrew fellowship from a woman in the church who was charged with unspecified immorality. Then we dealt with the matter of Lewis. S. Thompson, the insurance agent who had joined us just a year earlier, on March 26, 1911. He addressed a letter to the church dated April 2, 1912.

Dear Brethren:

I herewith make application for a letter of dismissal that I may join the New Hope Baptist Church. If you find that the conditions of recent development are such as to prevent you from honoring the above request, you will please do me the honor of dropping my name from your roll that I may join the above church. I take this action after the most careful and prayerful consideration. I have nothing but a bleeding heart full of love for you people and I assure you of my deepest sympathies in all your troubles, my delight at all of your joys and my most sincere and best prayers and wishes for a future that will excel all previous accomplishments for righteousness.

Once again the church showed its hesitation to resort to the measure of withdrawing fellowship. A motion was made:

That fellowship be withdrawn from L. S. Thompson, on charge of disloyalty to the church, backbiting, slandering both Pastor & church, the board having thoroughly investigated the matter in a special meeting at which sufficient evidence was offered along with statements by Mr. Thompson to sustain the charges, full consideration & courtesy was shown Mr. Thompson in this special meeting which lasted about two hours on 4/1/12, but he failed to explain or justify his actions, at this interval the church clerk read a letter from Mr. L. S. Thompson dated 4/2/12 in which he asks this church to grant him a letter of dismission to join the New Hope Church, and if the church could not do this, he asks that this church drop his name from its roll that he may join the New Hope Church.

The record goes on, but the result of it all was that we felt our brother was not in good standing and we could not in good conscience grant him a letter, so we dropped his name from the roll. Someone, presumably the church clerk, has written in the left margin of Mr. Thompson's letter: "charges sustained & fellowship withdrawn. 4/2/12."

At this meeting we also appointed a search committee to find a new pastor. There were also preparations to be made for a revival coming later in the month. We got Mr. Turlington to make arrangements for a piano for the occasion, got a couple of other gents to secure an additional platform, and appointed Homer Dew, W. M. Moss, Mrs. E. S. Taylor, and Gertrude McLean to make arrangements for special music.

On April 14, out in the icy north Atlantic, the RMS *Titanic* went down, taking 1,517 souls with it.

Our big revival began that day and closed on April 28. It was a big deal, and I'd imagine the *Titanic* came up several times in the sermons. The preacher was T. T. Martin of Blue Mountain, Mississippi. Martin was a native of Mississippi who attended Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville and pastored churches in Kentucky and Colorado. He intended to enter foreign missions, but had a nearly fatal attack of food poisoning and, on advice, returned to Colorado to recover. There he was pastor at Cripple Creek from 1897 to 1900, when he entered full-time evangelistic work. He did a lot of open-air preaching to miners in the area. He took to this kind of thing, and organized a group of preachers and singers called the Blue Mountain Evangelists, which was booked all over the country. Whether members of this particular group or not, special musicians for the revival were Mr. and Mrs. Jack L. Scholfield of Chicago. They were employed by the Home Mission Board to conduct singing in services held by traveling evangelists. Scholfield is remembered as the author of the hymn "Saved! Saved!" as well as composer of the tune RAPTURE, to which it is sung.38 Fourteen people joined the church in full membership, plus a couple more under watchcare. We disbursed \$521 for all costs, including hotel and traveling expenses for the guests. Money was clearly not the problem it used to be. A few weeks after the meeting Martin wrote Mr. Pettus on "Martin & Scholfield, Evangelists" stationery, asking him to give an enclosed letter to a member of the church who had talked to him about selling a Shetland pony.

During May we took up a collection of one hundred dollars for Jackson Chapel First Baptist Church, "the colored Church of Wilson," to help in the building of their new structure, which was going up in 1912.

A number of important things came up at the Wednesday night business

38. C. B. Hamlett, III, "Thomas Theodore Martin," in *Southern Baptist Encyclopedia*, 2:825; Music and Richardson, "I Will Sing the Wondrous Story," 378–379.

meeting on May 8, following a baptismal service. A. D. McGowen and R. A. Turlington were appointed a permanent Organ Committee, to contract with organists from time to time and to keep the key to the organ, with no one allowed to practice on it without the permission of the committee. The deacons recommended that we liberalize our requirements for membership just a wee bit. Henceforth we would receive as members, without rebaptizing, anyone from any other Christian denomination who had themselves been immersed. Heretofore we were requiring even Primitive Baptists to be baptized again. In addition, we let it be known that we really, really, did not want to lose Mr. Blanchard. We offered to raise his salary and provide him with a better parsonage. If he preferred, we would rent a better house for him. He said he greatly appreciated it but couldn't give an answer at that time.

He declined. At the evening service of Sunday, May 12, 1912, he preached his last sermon with us. The other churches in town called off their own services to worship with us. The congregation was small, though. (It was a dark and stormy night.)

Charles Wayne Blanchard was one of the most effective pastors in our history. He came at a time when we were deeply unsettled, apparently by personal problems within the membership. He managed to calm the waters. He instituted a printed church newsletter. He developed an adult Sunday School. He seemed to have overseen a financial system that became more stable. We don't hear anything during his stay about our being behind in payments. He introduced us to some denominational activities of the Southern Baptist Convention. Our membership grew. He seems to have taken an active interest in the music program. He came to us when we were slipping and sliding, and he gave us traction before he left.

When Brother Blanchard left us, he returned to the pastorate at Kinston for a second term. Her later served a number of churches in eastern North Carolina. He evidently had to drop out of circulation for a while because of illness; he wrote a letter in the *Biblical Recorder* of July 19, 1933, that his health was restored, and he was again "available." In November Arthur, a son by Charles's wife Virginia, died at age forty-seven of pellagra at his home in Raleigh. Juliet, Charles's second wife, died suddenly at home the next year, 1934, in New Bern. By 1936 CW was back in South Carolina, where he got married a third time, to a widow in Leesville. There he stayed until he died at home on January 4, 1939. He was buried at the Wake Chapel cemetery in Fuquay Springs, North Carolina. An obituary in the minutes of the Atlantic Baptist Association for 1940 described him as the "Old War Horse." The writer said, "I am afraid that many of our people do not realize what this man of God was worth to the cause of Christ in eastern North Carolina."

Blanchard had the peculiar idea that Easter was essentially a pagan holiday that had been Christianized by the Catholic Church and shouldn't really be

celebrated.³⁹ While he was in his second pastorate at Kinston, he conducted a long disputation on the subject with the Rev. Albert New, rector of the Episcopal Church in Weldon, North Carolina, and published in the *Times* of Manning, South Carolina. Just what the connection was among Blanchard in Kinston, New in Weldon, and a South Carolina newspaper is hard to imagine. Blanchard had been pastor in Manning before coming to Wilson, and that might account for the local paper's interest: perhaps Blanchard had made an issue of Easter while there. Maybe he did. Easter Sunday had been his last Sunday in Manning. The *Times* reprinted the debate in a separate, undated publication of fifty-eight pages.⁴⁰ If he made an issue of it while in Wilson, no memory remains of it.

^{39.} The word "Easter" is in fact derived from the Germanic goddess of spring and fertility, Oestre, probably related to the Canaanite goddess Ashtoreth of the Bible. Christians in northern Europe transformed the old pagan festivals so as to center around the anniversary of Jesus' resurrection observed by the Church.

^{40.} Easter: A Discussion on the History of Its Origin, etc. It was distributed by the Rev. Mr. New, presumably from Weldon.

Chapter 17

A Mission Is Born and a Ministry Ends

1912-1916 (T. Williams Chambliss)

A time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted.

-ECCLESIASTES 3:2 KIV

LEFT LEADERLESS BY THE DEPARTURE of a well-loved and effective pastor, we at First Baptist of Wilson found ourselves mature enough to take care of ourselves pretty well until a new pastor should show up. We had a series of supply preachers. The first was young Sidney Edgerton, whom we had recently ordained. On the day he preached, May 19, 1912, we accepted for membership a man who came to us from a Free Will Baptist Church. Under our recently adopted policy, we did not ask that he be reimmersed. J. C. Caldwell, president of Atlantic Christian College, preached for us June 9, and we called off our evening services that night because that evening the pastor of First Christian was going to hold his last service there and we thought we should be there. C. J. D. Parker from Reidsville came to us one Sunday in July. On August 11 we had a guest preacher, W. H. Rich, all the way up from Atlanta. We took up a collection that day to provide a trained nurse to help a man living out near Wiggins Mill who was sick with typhoid and in needy circumstances. He was not a member of any church at all, but somehow he

^{1.} Parker went on to become an outstanding figure among Virginia Baptists, pastoring Moffett Memorial in Danville for twenty-two years. Obituary, *RH*, October 3, 1935.

came to our attention. On September 15 William Wright Barnes led our service, newly back in the country after serving three years as principal of El Colegio Cubano-Americano in Havana. Barnes was a local boy, born just up the road in Elm City in 1883. In 1905 he was principal of the public school in Wilson. He went on to seminary in Louisville and, with a master's degree on his résumé, took the post in Cuba, where he had spent a year as a teacher earlier. He earned a ThD from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth and stayed on to be professor of church history until his retirement in 1953.² This paragraph is not just a list of names; it is a demonstration of how far we had come. We now had connections in the denomination. We knew of men whom we could call on and who were willing to respond. We were in close touch with Baptist life elsewhere.

Soon we found our man. Thomas Williams Chambliss came up from Charlotte on Sunday, September 19, 1912. After the evening service we asked him to excuse himself while we talked things over. We decided to call him, offering him a yearly salary of fifteen hundred dollars plus use of the parsonage, as well as seventy-five dollars to cover moving expenses. Clearly we were feeling financially secure. He accepted our offer.

TW, as he usually styled himself (though he sometimes went by "Williams"), was born in Aiken, South Carolina, on March 12, 1866. As well as being Baptist preachers, both his father and grandfather were writers and editors. The grandfather, Alex W. Chambliss, edited a Baptist paper in Alabama. The father, Joseph Ellerbee Chambliss, held churches from Maryland to Missouri and for a while was editor of Missouri's Baptist paper, Word and Way.³ He also wrote a biography of David Livingstone. It is never cited in modern biographies, but it went through four editions before being reprinted by Negro Universities Press in 1970. TW learned to read at his father's knee by reading the newspapers with him. Early on he developed a love for newspapers. His mother, Rebecca Ann, died of burns in March 1883, and his father remarried in November in St. Paul, Minnesota. The second wife was the widow of Rebecca Ann's brother. (Rebecca Ann was Joseph Ellerbee's cousin. Not that there's anything wrong with that.)

TW studied at Howard College (now Samford University) in Alabama. He almost surely attended seminary at Louisville, but I have not found proof of it. There is a record in the Kansas City Business Directory for 1889–1891 that a T. W. Chambliss was working as a clerk in a business dealing with importing china. On November 2, 1891, TW married Mamie Beall Cottingham at Independence, Missouri. The couple would have two children, Clive and

^{2.} Handbook of Texas Online at www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/BB/fbadm.html.

^{3.} Maple, Missouri Baptist Biography, 3:81-85.





T. Williams and Mamie Cottingham Chambliss (John N. Cox)

Laviece. He began his ministry with a series of pastorates in Missouri before coming to Wadesboro, North Carolina, in 1910. Their church history speaks highly of him: "Mr. Chambliss, small in stature, did not lack for energy or enterprise and when he set his heart on anything it usually came to pass." He was particularly active in fostering the music program, and Mrs. Chambliss was an active participant and organizer. On leaving Wadesboro he went to Charlotte, where he worked with the *Observer* for a while, following "Red Buck" Bryant as the paper's roving reporter in the eastern counties. Bryant was legendary, and Chambliss would have had to have obvious talent to replace him. ⁵ But now he was coming our way, back into the ministry. We don't know exactly when he came, but he was here by Sunday, October 13. On December 18 the whole family presented their letters from Tryon Street Baptist Church in Charlotte: TW, his wife Mamie, his son Clive, and his daughter Laviece.

There was an exciting election that fall: President Taft ran for reelection against Democrat Woodrow Wilson and loose cannon Theodore Roosevelt. Someone shot TR as he was about to give a speech. The bullet lodged in his chest, but he went ahead, gave the address, and got medical attention later. In November 1912 the country elected Woodrow Wilson as president. There was a sudden sharp spike in births of boys named Woodrow. The North

^{4.} Huntley, From Seven to Sevenfold, 38-41.

^{5.} Claiborne, The Charlotte Observer, 124.

Carolina census of 1920 lists 1,854 males by the name of Woodrow, almost every one of them born during the eight years of Wilson's presidency. Many of them carried the middle initial "W," for "Wilson," as did my own uncle down in Mississippi.

We got 1913 off to a start with a January 1 meeting naming all sorts of church officers and committees for the next year. Of interest is the House Committee, the duties of which were "to see that the church house is kept in order and properly cleaned." Members were "Mesdames T. F. Pettus, E. S. Taylor, & W. M. Moss." (If you're going to ask the ladies to keep the church clean, you may as well be elegant about it.) Randall Turlington is noticeably always on the Music Committee. He was a local druggist, but was evidently into the music scene. He was also the Sunday School superintendent.

A printed church bulletin for January 26, 1913, has survived. The front has a big picture of the church building with its proud tower. We present ourselves as "THE CHURCH THAT IS OPEN TO EVERYBODY, STRIVING TO BE OF HELP TO EVERYBODY." Mrs. J. J. Privette is organist, and A. C. Stallings is chorister. We note that "the Pastor has his office in the Church entrance on Pine Street. He is usually in the office in the morning. It will be his pleasure to respond to needs at any time—day or night, in cases of necessity. May be seen by appointment." The parsonage telephone is 421-J; the church office is 421-L. Inside is an order of worship for the morning service: organ prelude, doxology, invocation, hymns, prayers, sermon. There is a responsive reading from Romans 8:31-39 printed in the bulletin. It was a fairly formal order of service, much like many First Baptists in cities our size over the South. We had no evening service that day because of Missionary Meetings at the Methodist Church. The third page is devoted to some pastoral thoughts and thanks. He singles out the Sunbeams as a joy to pastor and people. He's happy to announce that the furnace is now in shape. There are now three adult Sunday School classes: Boethia, Baraca, and Philathea. The back page gives an array of church officers and committee members, as well as a schedule of mission offerings. Money given for missions (put in that part of the duplex envelope) will go to foreign missions in December and January; home missions in February and March; education in April; Sunday School missions in May; aged ministers' relief in June; associational missions in July, August, and September; and state missions in October and November, with special offerings on Thanksgiving for the Orphanage and on Christmas for aged ministers. The bulletin reveals an active church and a pastor hard at work.

We had a big revival April 20–28, 1913. An evangelist from Atlanta, Will L. Walker, did the preaching, and the singing was led by Earl L. Wolslagel of Asheville. Wolslagel was from Ohio, twenty-four years old at the time. As early as 1910, still in Ohio, he gave his occupation as "singing evangelist." In

the 1930s and 1940s he was living in New York City, still working as a singing evangelist. When living in Asheville, he registered for the World War I draft as an employee of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, but his World War II draft card shows him employed by the Moody Bible Institute of Chicago, even though living on Long Island. Wolslagel was much in demand. He was especially good with young people. Walker and Wolslagel must have constituted a high-octane team. Forty people joined the church, twenty-nine for baptism, among them Floyd Moss's seventeen-year-old son Henry and W. M. Moss's ten-year-old son Howell. No collections were taken during the meetings, but envelopes were mailed out, and \$385.96 came in. Evangelist Walker showed up again as a guest on May 11 and was invited to preach again. Teams consisting of an evangelist and a "chorister" were popular at the time. The prototype was Billy Sunday and his musical sidekick from 1910 to 1930, Homer "Rody" Rodeheaver. Dwight L. Moody had traveled with the staid, stiff Ira Sankey, but Rody was an entertainer who played a mean trombone. The chorister's task was to get the audience warmed up and in a happy mood, not at all unlike a performer or group who opens for a traveling rock group today.6 This technique probably reached a pinnacle with Cliff Barrows and George Beverly Shea warming up the audience for Billy Graham. Walker and Wolslagel—say it out loud; it has a certain catchiness to it—must have worked together quite a bit. Mr. Chambliss had booked them for a revival back when he was in Wadesboro.

While Chambliss was serving the church in Wilson, he began writing a series of miscellaneous articles for a publication about the state, called *Sky-Land Magazine*. They ran from June 1913 through 1914. He obviously enjoyed writing. These were not religious in nature. They mostly concerned agriculture or the development of eastern North Carolina, though one was about the influence of newspapers on morality. He seems to have shared the racial attitudes of most white southerners of the time. One of these articles is in praise of the then governor, Locke Craig. One of the things he is singled out for is his presence at a notorious white supremacy rally in Laurinburg in 1898, where he took his stand with Charles B. Aycock "for the rule of the White Man." One writer has called the 1898 campaign "one of the most regrettable episodes in North Carolina history," and the massive gathering at Laurinburg was one of the lowest moments. Patrick Valentine recounts an episode in Wilson when there was "an ablest plea for peace" between the

^{6.} Weisberger, *They Gathered at the River*, 247–255.

^{7.} T. W. Chambliss, "The Little Giant of the Blue Ridge," *Sky-Land Magazine* (June 1913), 22–24; Orr, *Charles Brantley Aycock*, 112–113; Connor and Poe, *The Life and Speeches of Charles Brantley Aycock*, 70–71; Gibson, *Scotland County Emerging*, 206–211.

races at a biracial meeting at Jackson Chapel First Baptist. The speaker was Dr. C. S. Morris, a prominent Negro leader who had spent time in Africa as a missionary. Valentine describes T. W. Chambliss as "conspicuous in attention," citing a now-lost article from the *Daily Times*. It is hard to tell what that means. Perhaps he was suspicious and wanted to know what was going on; perhaps he was sympathetic and even on the platform. Jack Claiborne, who has written widely on state affairs, interprets it this way: "TWC sounds like a segregationist struggling with the morality of it all. In the end he was probably disillusioned with religion after his Wilson FBC tenure."

In May 1914, Pastor Chambliss raised the idea of establishing a mission church in Wilson. A committee of five was appointed, chaired by T. F. Pettus. The committee found a vacant lot at the corner of Pender and Academy Streets, which they described as "well located in a good section of the town." Somewhere they found \$750 to pay Dr. Ben Herring for the lot, and they had it deeded to the church trustees, Cicero Culpepper, K. H. Watson, and W. W. Simms. They urged that a Sunday School be started out there as soon as possible.

In August 1914 the Great War, as they called it, began in Europe. We would eventually have to rename it World War I.

In 1914 we published what was probably our first church directory. It is a 5-by-6½-inch booklet of twenty-eight pages, nine of which are advertisements and nine a more or less alphabetized list of members and street addresses. The rest consists of various edifying thoughts. Our church motto is "There is a necessary limit to our achievement, but none to our attempt." The directory was almost certainly Pastor Chambliss's idea; he had done the same thing at Wadesboro.

In September, a whiff of financial difficulty. It turns out that "certain individuals" have been standing security for two years for a note representing the church's indebtedness of \$1,050. The trustees were empowered to borrow the money, using the parsonage as security, thus relieving the anonymous members who had been bearing the burden.

With March 1915 came revival time, ten days of it, with Dr. W. M. Vines, pastor of First Baptist in Charlotte preaching for us. There were forty-eight additions, twenty-eight by baptism. In May we expressed confidence in our pastor by voting him a pay raise. In August it came to our attention that our young Sidney Edgerton, down in Buies Creek, was in poor health and bad financial state. We committed ourselves to sending him thirty dollars a month for the next four months.

The Chambliss family began breaking up in 1915. Laviece had graduated

^{8.} Rise of a Southern Town, 153, 253.

^{9.} E-mail to the author, September 21, 2007.

from Meredith in 1914 and now had a job teaching English and math in Mount Olive. We granted her a letter of dismission in September. Clive, two years older, who had gotten a taste for journalism while working at the *Daily Times*, graduated from Wake Forest, also the year before, and took a job in High Point as city editor of the *High Point Enterprise*. We gave him his letter in October. TW and his wife Mamie now had an empty nest.

Backing up a few weeks, Sunday, March 28, marked the beginning of the church now known as Forest Hills, which got its start when we voted to establish a second mission by starting a Sunday School in the neighborhood called Five Points. We authorized the trustees to rent a building there and asked the pastor to have as many pews moved from our own Sunday School as was necessary for the mission church's purposes. In September we were notified that a local lawyer, E. J. Barnes, wished to give us a lot at Five Points on which to build a mission church. A committee was appointed to look into it, and they reported favorably. So we promptly appointed a Building Committee and told them to get to work and try to get it done by January 1, 1916, when our lease on the storefront would run out. We thought we could put up an adequate frame structure for \$750. In October 1915 we were forced once again to make repairs to the roof on the parsonage. This was getting to be a problem. In fact, it was extending to the new sanctuary. At the first meet-

OUR BUDGET

1918-1919

FOR CURRENT EXPENSES

aries of Pastor and Assistant \$	2100.00
rganist	300.00
Janitor	240.00
Lights, Water and Fuel	200.00
Repairs, Convention expenses, etc	560.00
Pay on Debt	1100.00
Total	4500,00

FOR BENEVOLENCE

Foreign Missions	400.00
Home Missions	300.00
State Missions	150.00
Associational Missions	200,00
Education (general fund)	100 00
Sunday Schools and Min. Relief	50,00
Total \$1	200,00
Total for Current Exp. and Benevo S	5700.00

N. B. This does not include voluntary offering of Sunday School, W. M. S. and the special offerings to Orphanage, and the Million Dollar Educational Fund.

Church budget for 1916 printed on three-by-five card (FBC)

ing of 1916, on January 5, we authorized the Committee on Repairs "to attend to the rotting timbers under the floor of the church"! The building was only ten years old, but already the supporting timbers were weakening. Something had to be wrong with that roof.

Great news from Five Points on Sunday, January 9, 1916! The property donated by Mr. E. J. Barnes now belonged to us; a 30-by-50-foot building had been erected there at a cost of \$855.13; an insurance policy for \$500 had been bought on it and the first premium paid; pulpit, pews, and stove had been moved out there from our own property; K. H. Watson had donated a new organ worth \$36; and the mission at Five Points was starting out "absolutely free of debt!" The opening services were held there this day at three o'clock. Attendance was good, and Pastor Cham-



Five Points Baptist Mission (Wilson County Public Library)

bliss preached. Meanwhile, not much seems to have been going on at the Pender Street mission.

That evening, after a busy day, the telephone rang at the Chambliss home, and TW received word that his father had died back in Missouri. He was unable to attend the funeral, but he wrote a long obituary for the *Biblical Recorder* of January 26. We can get a better feel for the occasion from a letter he wrote his father's sister a few months later, on April 29, 1916. It was typed on printed FBC stationery with his full name given as pastor, and the heading "Office of the Pastor." At the time his aunt was probably living in Shelbyville, Kentucky.

Dear Aunt Bettie.

You must pardon me for having postponed writing so long. Your letter came at the beginning of simultaneous revival services here [March 26–April 9] and I have been so busy that I could not answer your letter sooner.

It was a joy to hear from you—it brings sadness to my heart when I realize how little I know of Father's early life. He seldom talked of it and I have been away from him so long that I had little opportunity of getting information and did not realize that he would be gone—and then no opportunity of adding to my meager store. Grandfather told me all I know—years ago when he lived in Montgomery City [Missouri] and I kept the notes all these years. [TW visited his grandfather there in September 1889.]

I have added what I know to what you sent and am sending it to you. I will have the words of appreciation which appeared in the Word and Way copied and will send to you—I want to keep the copy I have—

You will never know the shock to me. I had just gone home from the preachings Sunday night, January 9-Mamie and Laviece were sitting with me—I had been unwell and was extremely nervous and the telephone bell rang. It was just at my elbow and thinking it was some member of the Church I picked up the receiver and then came the telegram—delivered over the long distance wire from Raleigh. Our telegraph office closes Sunday night at 6 o'clock and the manager in Raleigh, fifty miles away, knew me and thought I should have the message—it almost made me collapse. It was from Ed [brother born in Baltimore 1870] and simply said, "Father died this morning—what arrangements shall we make." I did not know where Father died. Did not know he was sick. Only a little while before—two weeks I had a letter from him. After awhile I decided it would be impossible for me to go. Mamie and my physician both advised against it.

I have not seen Father since 1907—but I will see him some day and it is not likely to be long.

I have never recovered from a nervous breakdown in 1910 but am back at work.¹⁰

TW confesses that he doesn't know much about his father and that he hasn't seen him in nine years, although they must have been in touch, since the father had only recently sent a letter. The father's final illness was very short, and he may not even have been sick at the time he wrote the letter. We learn that TW himself is not in good health (he thinks he may see his father ere long), that he had a "nervous breakdown" six years earlier, and that he was "extremely nervous" the night the telephone bell rang in the parsonage. In 1910 he was pastor in Wadesboro. We may assume he was in somewhat precarious mental health when he came to us in 1912, although he was obviously functioning quite well. He certainly appears to have been an eager, energetic pastor. Brother Ed probably asked TW about arrangements because TW was the oldest of Joseph and Rebecca's ten children. Joseph was buried beside Rebecca in Davies County, Missouri. I don't know whether the second wife, Ann Elizabeth Bishop Ellerbe Chambliss, survived him.

^{10.} Letter in archives of Partee Center for Baptist Historical Studies, William Jewell College, Liberty, MO.

We at First Baptist knew that our little congregation at Five Points would need its own pastor, so on January 30 we issued a call to Walter C. Richardson of Raleigh as assistant pastor. We worked up a package deal for his salary. The Home Mission Board would pay five hundred dollars a year, we would add two hundred, and the folks at Five Points would be expected to add another hundred. Mr. Richardson accepted, and we officially dubbed the mission Second Baptist Church. Richardson would serve in this capacity until 1921, when he accepted a call to West Albemarle Baptist Church. He later was pastor of Glenwood and Guilford Baptist Churches around Greensboro. After being bedridden for two years, he died August 31, 1940, at his home in Guilford County, at age eighty-two. Earlier in life, Richardson had been an agent for the Southern Railway in Raleigh, and a telegraph operator there for Associated Press and Western Union. He is very likely the telegraph agent who received the wire about the death of Mr. Chambliss's father and telephoned him that Sunday night with the message.

The revival that TW told his Aunt Bettie about ran from March 26 to April 9 and was successful. Thirty people came forward and joined us. The preacher was John Jeter Hurt, pastor of First Baptist in Durham, a man who had a bright future as a Baptist leader ahead of him. Later in the year he would go to First Baptist in Wilmington, and later to Jackson, Tennessee, where he would be president of Union University during the Great Depression and World War II.

In May 1916 the Southern Baptist Convention met in Asheville. By this time the son, Clive Chambliss, was working as managing editor of the evening paper there, the *Asheville Times*. There's no record of it in the church minutes, yet it's all but certain that Pastor Chambliss would take advantage of this opportunity to attend the convention when it was so close, and visit with his son at the same time. While in Asheville, TW must have learned of an opening at the *Times*. On June 4, 1916, at the end of the morning service, T. W. Chambliss submitted his resignation, to take effect as of August 1. He began work as the general manager of the *Asheville Times* ("Asheville's Livest Newspaper") on September 4.

Meanwhile the daughter, Laviece, was having problems. Her roommate in Mount Olive introduced her to a fellow named Frank Oliver, and they fell in love. They were engaged and set a wedding date. But for some reason TW did not approve of Mr. Oliver. As a student at UNC, Frank had been involved in a hazing incident that resulted in the death of a student. There's no evidence that Frank had anything to do with the death, but all those involved were expelled (Frank graduated from North Carolina State), and it was perhaps for this reason that TW did not relish the idea of his daughter's marrying him.

^{11.} Obituary in the News and Observer, September 2, 1940.

At any rate the wedding was called off, sometime in 1917, after invitations had been sent out. At this point Frank left the country, and Laviece moved to Asheville to live with her parents and brother Clive. Frank Oliver had been in the Colonial Constabulary in the Philippine Islands. During World War I the constabulary was absorbed into the U.S. Army, and in 1917 Frank was ordered back to the islands.

Then came 1918, and as the war raged in Europe, a deadly worldwide epidemic of what was called the Spanish influenza got under way. In Asheville, young Clive caught the flu; he died at home April 10, 1918. The Asheville Times as well as the competing Asheville Citizen both ran editorials and news items about the young man's death. Clive had wanted to serve in the military during the war but had a physical impairment of some kind. He had an operation to correct it and was hoping to be accepted in some limited capacity in communications. The funeral was held at the home, 271 Montford Avenue. The pastor of FBC Asheville presided. The pallbearers were all employees of the Times. Dr. Powell, the pastor, chose as scripture Revelation 21:4 and 22:14. He used Clive's own Bible to read from, and when he turned to those passages he found that Clive had previously marked them.¹² Clive was buried in Riverside Cemetery in Asheville. Later, during the height of the epidemic in Asheville, Mamie and Laviece served as Red Cross volunteers. When it was over, Mrs. Vanderbilt invited them and the other volunteers to tea at Biltmore House. Laviece enjoyed telling about how grand an occasion it was, but would always add, "We didn't normally socialize with the Vanderbilts." ¹³

With Clive's death TW's life started falling apart, and perhaps Mamie's did also. In 1919 Laviece bought her own ticket to sail to Manila, where she joined Frank Oliver and married him there on June 25 of that year. Her mother went with her as far as San Francisco. There had to have been tension in that family. After the war the Olivers stayed there and went into business. Later they returned to the States, but four of their five children were born in the Philippines.

At some point T. W. Chambliss left the *Times*, though there is record of his addressing the North Carolina Press Association meeting in Asheville in July 1918, on "The Editor's Duty in War Time." In 1920 he moved to Shelby and, starting January 1, worked for O. Max Gardner as press secretary during his campaign for the Democratic nomination for governor. The primary went

^{12.} Asheville Times and Asheville Citizen, April 10–11, 1918; BR, April 18, 1918.

^{13.} Much of the personal information about the family comes from two great-grandchildren, Gwin Cox and John N. Cox, who have been helpful and forthcoming.

^{14.} Polk County News, August 2, 1918.

^{15.} There is an extensive correspondence to and from TWC in the Oliver Max Gardner Papers, folders 71–81 (1920), Southern Historical Collection, UNC–Chapel

into a runoff in which Gardner's opponent Cameron Morrison emerged the victor. The main issue was votes for women. Gardner was for it, Morrison against. It took on ugly racial overtones due to the fear that allowing white women to vote would open the way for Negro women to vote. Governor Bickett said that "a Negro man can be controlled but nothing could frighten a Negro woman." The Morrison camp circulated a photo of Gardner with a black woman. Tw's former employer, the *Charlotte Observer*, supported Morrison, and Chambliss gave the paper "a good bit of Baptist brimstone for its biased coverage." I ronically, in August 1920 the Nineteenth Amendment became law, guaranteeing votes for women, so by the time of the general election in November, the whole question had become moot.

After the election Chambliss began a decade of wandering from job to job. In 1921 he was back in Charlotte as an agent for Jefferson Standard Life Insurance. He moved to Raleigh, where he got a job with the North Carolina Cotton Growers Cooperative. Then he sold insurance, then he was with the South Atlantic Mortgage Company, then he was selling insurance again. He went from one downtown office to another for several years, never seeming to settle.

He was probably tied to Raleigh because of an illness of Mamie's: she had heart trouble. She died at home, 119 Park Avenue, on May 7, 1930. 18 Her death certificate reveals that she also had a psychoneurosis, and whatever this was may have been as much a reason for not leaving Raleigh as anything else. In any case, life must have been terribly difficult for Mr. Chambliss during those last years. Mamie was taken to Asheville for burial beside her son Clive. Also buried in the same cemetery plot, in an unmarked grave, are the cremated remains of little Clive Oliver, a son of Laviece's, who died on Christmas Day, 1927, in the Philippine Islands, at the age of one year, two months. 19

TW left Raleigh at this point. He does not appear in the 1930 city directory. According to the family, he went to Mount Olive to live with Laviece and Frank, who by this time were back in North Carolina. However, he and Frank Oliver simply could not get along, and he left. He next shows up in the small city of Hutchinson, Kansas, where he was editor of a weekly, the *Hutchinson Record*. He was now back in his element. He loved the newspa-

Hill. These letters concern publicity for the campaign, and they show that TWC was nothing if not energetic.

^{16.} Christensen, *The Paradox of Tar Heel Politics*, 48–50.

^{17.} Jack Claiborne, e-mail to the author, September 19, 2007.

^{18.} A short obituary was in BR, May 14, 1930.

^{19.} There is some doubt in the family that the cremated remains were ever placed there, but Riverside Cemetery records clearly indicate, both on a diagram of the plot and in a ledger of burials, that the cremated remains of Clive Wooten Oliver were buried there on May 12, 1928.

per business. He loved the physical activity of composing at a typewriter. He wrote of the almost sensuous pleasure of hearing and feeling the clacking keys.²⁰ He wrote a weekly column titled "Ramblings" for the paper, and no doubt many unsigned editorials as well. He began suffering from arthritis, and in early 1936 had to spend quite some time in a Kansas City hospital, but he submitted his columns from there, reflecting on his prospects. "I had planned so much for Nineteen Thirty-Six," he wrote wistfully.²¹ An operation was planned, but it had to be postponed because of an infection he had developed.

On March 20, 1936, under the "Ramblings" heading appeared a brief news item: that T. W. Chambliss was seriously ill at the home of his sister, Miss Laviece Chambliss, in Kansas City. It reported that "this week . . . Mr. Chambliss has had very few moments without either delirium or stupor, accompanied by high fevers." That was on the editorial page. But on the front page appeared, in bold type across two columns, a late announcement that T. Williams Chambliss had died the day before, March 19.

The Record received the sad news late yesterday afternoon of the death of T. W. Chambliss at the home of his sister in Kansas City, Mo. . . .

Mr. Chambliss went home the Saturday before Christmas and was in bed for nearly three weeks, his trouble being diagnosed as arthritis. He made some improvement and thought he was able to get back on the job and returned to his work on February 1, and faithfully worked at the job, despite his suffering. He became much worse on Thursday, March 5, and on Saturday, March 7, he returned to Kansas City, where he died yesterday afternoon.

Every member of The Record staff feels deeply his passing. A gentleman of the first rank, a newspaperman of great ability and unusual fairness developed by years of training in the old school of journalism, congenial under all conditions, and loyal beyond words. . . .

We, as co-workers of his, learned much, not only in the proper conduct of a newspaper, but also in the value of friendship, fairness and character—and for our association with him, we believe we have been helped. So it is with sadness that we write "30" for Mr. Chambliss.

^{20.} *Hutchinson Record*, January 10, 1936. 21. *Hutchinson Record*, January 17, 1936.

"Write 30" was newspaper jargon of the day. When stories were sent over the wire, "30" was put at the end of a transmission to let those on the receiving end know that the story was ended and there would be no more. It is of interest that no mention is made in the encomium that T. Williams had ever been a minister of the gospel. By this time he appears to have left that part of his life behind. While he was in Asheville, the first time he appears in the city directory, "Rev." is placed beside his name, although he was working at the newspaper. Later it is dropped. We know that he was active to some degree as a member of First Baptist in Asheville. It would be interesting to know whether in his last years he did any preaching on the side. It may be that Word and Way had an obituary which would tell us that, but if it exists I have not been able to find it. TW was certainly a capable and successful pastor, one of our best. He took pride in his accomplishments as pastor; he sent frequent notices of interesting happenings to the Biblical Recorder. But he enjoyed writing, he had been fascinated by newspapers since childhood, and he seemed irresistibly drawn to the roar of the presses, the clacking of typewriters, and the smell of newsprint and printer's ink. He found a larger pulpit.

Gwin Cox, a great-granddaughter, believes that T. Williams was a free-thinker who found that his thought no longer corresponded with that of the church as it once had, perhaps because of his reaction to Clive's death, and, being an honest man, struck out to follow a different path. Chambliss willed his large personal library to Wake Forest College, but Ms. Cox owns some of her grandfather's books, including one that William Jennings Bryan signed for him. She notes that some volumes in his set of Harvard Classics, such as Emerson's essays, were never read: the pages are still uncut. But he had obviously read and enjoyed the *Arabian Nights*.

T. Williams Chambliss was buried in Kansas City. He died of the flu.

Chapter 18

A Steady Course through Rough Seas

1916-1927 (J. Marcus Kester)

Abroad the sword bereaveth, at home there is as death.

—LAMENTATIONS 1:20 KJV

WERE NOT WITHOUT a pastor long. Our associate W. C. Richardson filled in for us some and we had guest speakers, but on August 20, 1916, the search committee was in a position to recommend to the church J. Marcus Kester, who at the time was a supply preacher at Tabernacle Baptist in Raleigh. At the same meeting we voted to erect a church building on the Pender Street lot where had begun a mission in 1914. We don't hear much about it, so that one was probably not coming along as well as our offspring at Five Points.

John Marcus Kester had been a college buddy of Sidney Edgerton at Wake Forest, and it was probably Sidney who commended his friend to us. We trusted Sidney, who was one of our own, and he didn't lead us astray.

Kester was born April 26, 1887, in Cleveland County near Kings Mountain. He went to Mars Hill College for a couple of years, and graduated from Wake Forest in 1912. Bethlehem Baptist Church near Kings Mountain ordained

1. Conversation with Kester's son-in-law Perry James. Mr. James was the husband of Kathryn Kester, who passed away in October 2004. Kathryn and her husband Perry celebrated fifty-seven years of marriage. Mr. James is the source for much of the family information given here. I am also drawing from material in the Baptist Collection at WFU, as well as other sources.



Marcus and Anna Kester's wedding picture, 1915 (Perry James)

him to the ministry in June of that year. He went to seminary at Newton Theological Seminary (now Andover-Newton) in Newton Center, Massachusetts, today essentially a part of Boston. There he earned the BD and ThM degrees, though he also did part of his graduate work at Harvard, the United Free Church College of Glasgow University in Scotland, and Christ Church and Mansfield Colleges at Oxford University in England. He studied under notable figures, including the still-renowned New Testament scholar James Moffatt. He had won the J. Spencer Turner Fellowship for this study abroad.

Marcus had some personal business to take care of before doing his study abroad. He had fallen in love with Anna Elizabeth Lawson, a Boston girl, daughter of two immigrants, Nils Larsen (he changed it to Lawson) of Sweden and Sophia Rasmussen of Denmark. They had met in the United States but occasionally went back to the old countries. Nils was in the bicycle business here, and he would take loads of American bicycles with him to Sweden to sell there and pay for the trip.² Anna and Marcus married in Boston on June 14, 1915. Before too long they set sail from New York on the SS *St. Paul*;

^{2.} He later went into business repairing Reo automobiles. The Reo was a precursor to the Oldsmobile.

they arrived at Liverpool on October 11, 1915. Marcus's passport application describes him as five foot nine, with dark brown hair, light blue eyes, and a round full face. Attached to the application is a nice photograph of him as well as one of his wife, but unfortunately Anna's picture does not reproduce well, and I cannot find a separate application for her. After the months of study in England and Scotland, the young couple sailed on the *St. Paul* once again, leaving Liverpool on April 1, 1916, and arriving in New York on April 14.

Their first child, Gwendolyn, was born in Massachusetts soon after the couple arrived back in the States. Marcus then took his bride and their daughter down to Kings Mountain to meet his family. The girl from Boston thought she was at the end of the earth and was probably very happy when her husband went up to Raleigh for that supply work, then was called to First Baptist in the metropolis of Wilson. A. B. Carroll, chair of our pulpit search committee, wrote Kester on August 30, 1916, on the stationery of his grocery, confirming some details that had been discussed in conversation. Mr. Kester was businesslike enough to want things in writing. He was assured that the parsonage was being refinished on the inside and that the outside would be repainted. Carroll advised Kester that he had discussed with the Sunday School superintendent the question of whether the pastor would be expected to teach a class. He writes, "It was decided that we would not ask our next pastor to do this." Evidently this had been the previous practice. Carroll also mentioned specifically the leaks in the roof of the church itself and told the new pastor it was "being looked after." Mr. Kester began his work here preaching at both services on Sunday, October 1, 1916.

On Wednesday, November 1, Randall Turlington, the Sunday School superintendent, suggested that the church procure a "motion picture machine" for the Sunday School, to show "Biblical pictures." Everyone thought it was a good idea and told him to go ahead. We also authorized the pastor and the clerk to make the formal application to the association for help with our missions on Pender Street and at Second Baptist Church. The next week Pastor and Mrs. Kester presented their letters: his from Bethlehem Baptist near Kings Mountain, hers from Second Baptist of Newton Upper Falls, Massachusetts. The next Wednesday, November 15, shows us facing modern times head-on. We authorized the Building and Supplies Committee to buy and install a gas water heater with the boiler in the parsonage and to have the pipes extended into the church to heat the water in the baptistry. (Good news for new members—no more immersion in cold water! A long way from Toisnot.) We also told them to buy a gas range for the parsonage kitchen and a couple of small gas heaters for the rest of the house. Also, we wanted "certain"

^{3.} Letter in possession of Perry James, Raleigh; copy in church archives.



Pender Street mission (Wilson County Public Library)

improvements" made in the Sunday School rooms. The next week the circulation manager of the *Biblical Recorder* talked to us about the state paper, trying to drum up some business for it. On Sunday, December 3, we took up our annual offering for the Orphanage and collected just over three hundred dollars. The Junior Order (see chapter 15) attended the morning service in a body.

In March 1917 we authorized the trustees to borrow \$1,250 with a mortgage on the Pender Street property to pay the contractors, who had pretty well completed building the church there.

On April 2, 1917, President Wilson asked Congress for a declaration of war against the Central Powers: Germany and Austria-Hungary. American troops were going to Europe.

May 1917 gave Mr. Kester the opportunity to prove himself as an evange-listic preacher. We had revival beginning April 29, running through May 13. There were twenty-six additions—a successful series of meetings. A guest from Baltimore, Mr. B. W. Bush, led the singing. Later in May we ordered forty new songbooks for the Pender Street mission. On May 18 Congress passed the Selective Service Act, which provided for a military draft. Our thirty-year-old pastor registered on June 5.

A number of actions were taken in June, some of them personnel changes. We decided to send "the letter of discipline" to all members who were not attending. We withdrew fellowship from one recalcitrant sinner. We voted to

4. A copy of this letter is in the church archives.

order twelve "Baptist Hymnals" for the church. (In July we would change this to an order of one hundred copies of the *Baptist Hymn and Praise Book*.) R. A. Turlington resigned as Sunday School superintendent, thinking he could do more good as teacher of the Berean class for young men. A. B. Carroll was appointed to take his place. R. L. Patrick was made chair of the Music Committee: the previous chair, Walter T. Africa, and his family had recently left to return to Pennsylvania. There was soon to be a big "union meeting" in one of the warehouses—a community revival presented by a traveling evangelist. We voted solidly against participating.

We made a change in our budgeting procedure in October. Rather than give each month's mission offerings (in one side of the duplex envelope) to a certain cause, we would allocate 25 percent to home missions, 30 percent to associational missions, 20 percent to state missions, 15 percent to education, 5 percent to Sunday School missions, and 5 percent to ministerial relief. We would submit these payments each month, except the associational offering, which we would submit annually, making the yearly report in October before the meeting. Foreign mission offerings would be made in separate envelopes, as usual, and sent for the support of "our missionary in South Am." This is the first mention I have noticed of "our missionary." (I suspect it refers to the Southern Baptist Convention, not ourselves.) The City of Wilson was paving the downtown streets, and the church owed the city some money for that. We voted to pay 20 percent of the debt now and make four equal payments later. We discussed the possibility of selling part of the Pender Street lot to help pay down the \$1,250 debt, but decided against it.

In November, in consideration of Pastor Kester's "loyalty, efficiency, and sacrificial spirit," we raised his salary to eighteen hundred dollars per year. Kester's leadership was proving effective. There was a steady stream of new members in addition to those joining at the revival. He was respected as a pastor and recognized as a scholarly and effective preacher. Notice that once again "efficiency" is listed as a management virtue. The leaders of the "scientific management" movement at the time were Frank and Lillian Gilbreth—"efficiency experts," they were called. It would be only a mischievous joke, but we might wonder whether the Kesters were secret admirers of the Gilbreths. Frank and Lillian had twelve children. Frank Jr. told of their upbringing in his 1948 best-selling book *Cheaper by the Dozen*. The Kesters would eventually have ten.

At our Wednesday meeting on December 19, 1917, we voted as usual on the slate of officers for the coming year, but we also cut some deadwood off the church rolls: sixteen members who were not attending and who had not responded to the cautionary letters sent out earlier. We thought W. C. Richardson, the faithful pastor out at Second Baptist, deserved a raise, and we gave him one. We also decided to cooperate after all with the other churches

in the upcoming union meeting "in order to conserve coal." That was a wartime measure. Saving energy was important at the time. The United States would adopt daylight savings time the next year as a nationwide method of saving energy. We should put the sparse records in the church books in context. Mr. Kester was preaching every Sunday to a congregation that picked up newspapers every day to read headlines dealing with the war, and we had members "over there." It was a stressful time.

In the minutes of the December 19 meeting is the first mention of Christmas in our church records. It is as follows: "Our Sunday School was asked to contribute \$10 to the Pender Street S. S. for their Xmas tree. It was decided that our S.S. following our usual custom, bring a lot of fruit & provisions to the Church for our Xmas day & send it to the needy."

In 1918 the Baptist State Convention was preparing to conduct a Million Dollar Endowment Campaign for college and schools of the state. At our February 20 business meeting we agreed to participate. Mrs. Pettus and Mrs. Turlington recommended that we begin a Junior Choir. We agreed, and voted to have the treasurers of the church and of the Sunday School pay five dollars a month toward the cost of training the choir. We authorized a committee of three men and three women appointed by the pastor to look into the cost of redecorating the church. A week later the committee reported that it would cost \$350 to refinish the interior of the church with three to four coats of paint. The church authorized the expense, as well as the installation of slot ventilators in the ceiling and the changing of the lights, presumably meaning the fixtures. In February our light bill from the city was \$2.16, plus \$1 for the lighting at Pender Street.

In March we recommended that we apply funds in hand for the redecorating of the church, repair of the organ, and payment of \$750 due at the bank. We needed to vacate the building while the redecoration was going on, and we accepted the kind invitation of the Presbyterian Church to use their facilities on the coming Sunday evening.

On Sunday, April 28, 1918, C. W. Stokes, one of our members and a local clothing merchant, presented the church with a "service flag." This idea began in 1917 and took hold during the war. Such a flag was a banner with a red border around a white center field, with a blue star in the middle for each member of a family or church or other organization with a person in the service. They hung in windows of many private homes during World War II, often with a gold star to indicate a member of the family who had died in service. This particular flag had twenty stars, one for each of the "boys" from our membership who were in the service of our country. I have identified eighteen names of servicemen from our church. We had a specially called service on Saturday, May 25, to baptize Isaac Strickland, one of the eighteen, and receive him into the church. The special arrangement was neces-



J. Marcus Kester (Kathryn Kester James)

sary because he was leaving to join the navy. (While there is a large plaque at the Park Avenue entrance to the sanctuary listing our members who served in World War II, there is none to the veterans of World War I. I have listed in an appendix to this book the names of those I can identify.)

After Sunday School on June 2 we had a special baptism for Ben R. Peele, another of the eighteen, who was about to leave for Europe. There were no regular Sunday services this day because of the big union meeting at Barnes Warehouse. It was conducted by Rodney Smith, better known as Gypsy Smith. Smith was a traveling evangelist from Britain, born and raised in a gypsy tent. He became one of the most famous of

all the traveling evangelists, on both sides of the Atlantic. He must have been successful on his Wilson visit, because the next Sunday nine people joined First Baptist, five by baptism.

We were a hospitable people. On June 30 we agreed to invite the "School for Pastors and Workers" to be held here next February, "on the Harvard plan." This meant the church members would provide bed and breakfast for the participants. In July we agreed to raise in advance the costs of the revival scheduled in September, so that we wouldn't have to collect an offering during the services. We also voted to put up a "bulletin board" outside the church (at a cost of thirty-six dollars). The minutes don't mention it, but on August 5, 1918, Mrs. Kester gave birth to their second child, John Jr., known as "Jack." He became a surgeon who practiced in Charlotte.

The revival, September 1–18, was conducted by the husband-and-wife team of Josiah H. Dew and Annie Mae Baker Dew. He preached; she sang. J. H. Dew was a very well known evangelist in great demand, a native of South Carolina, and graduate of Furman and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. There were twenty-two additions to the church, eleven for baptism.

October 1918 was a grim month in Wilson, as it was in the whole country.

^{5.} The term came to be used commonly about this time, so much so that an editor of the *Harvard Alumni Bulletin* 17, no. 14 (January 1914) had to ask if any readers knew its origin. A reader replied at some length in 17, no. 18 (February 1915): 322–323.

Just at the time the war in Europe seemed to be winding down, the worldwide epidemic of Spanish influenza reached its peak. By city ordinance church services and all other public gatherings were forbidden during the month. In the United States, the flu had first appeared in Kansas in January, during the coldest winter on record. It spread mostly among military bases, traditional vectors for disease, and rose sharply in the spring (when young Clive Chambliss died), but subsided. Then it soared again in the autumn. By the time the disease burned itself out, it had killed many millions of people around the world, more than died during the Black Death of the Middle Ages. There were more deaths from the flu among soldiers in World War I than from battle. Over half a million people died in this country. In Maplewood Cemetery in Wilson there are forty graves of people who died during October and the first week of November 1918, and in every case where cemetery records give cause of death, it is influenza or pneumonia (which usually is the immediate cause of death with the flu). Those forty are only white people who were buried in Maplewood. It doesn't count white people buried elsewhere or any black citizens at all. This was at a time when Wilson's total population was about ten thousand. Several members of First Baptist died during this time. Among them were Clay Winstead, Philip B. Sims, Mrs. W. J. Churchwell, Mrs. R. J. Taylor, and probably Mrs. T. J. Sanders and Leffie Boykin. There may have been deaths among our children and youngsters, whose names would not be on the rolls. We know no details, but Mr. Kester presided over several funerals during these dark weeks. Since all public gatherings were forbidden, and not many people would have wanted to attend a public meeting anyway, the funerals were probably all private, perhaps only graveside services. People were afraid to go out. Even obtaining groceries became a problem in Wilson. When we made up the associational letter back on October 1, we had only two deaths to report for the year. That changed dramatically before the association met in November. At the Baptist Orphanage in Thomasville, 410 of the 460 children caught the flu, but none died. The State Board of Health attributed it to treatment by "sunshine and fresh air." Actually, a peculiarity of this particular strain of flu was that it hit the population of young adults harder than it did children or the elderly. Not realizing the severity of the epidemic, life insurance companies took advantage of public panic to sell policies. The next year many filed for bankruptcy to avoid paying the beneficiaries.

At 11 A.M. on the eleventh day of the eleventh month of 1918, the armistice

^{6.} For North Carolina during the epidemic, see http://1918.pandemicflu.gov/your_state/north_carolina.htm. That site, "The Great Pandemic," from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Resources, is a rich source of information. The best book is John M. Barry, *The Great Influenza*.

ending World War I took effect.⁷ That was Paris time, or 6 a.m. in Wilson. The State Department released the news at 2:45 a.m. our time, and it spread down the telegraph line. A few hobbyists in town may even have picked up news on homemade crystal radio sets. Wilsonians spontaneously gathered at Goldsboro and Nash for loud celebrating, with gunfire. To be sure, a lot of our folks were there. The big bell at the fire house rang, the whistle at the electric light station blew, the court house bell rang, and before long the church bells were ringing as the news spread.⁸ Two days later, at our Wednesday night prayer meeting—at which time we surely gave thanks for the return of peace—we accepted as a member on promise of letter Mr. Sidney P. Watson, who at the time was with the army in France.

The Roanoke Association held its annual meeting in Nashville that year. The minutes record that the session had been postponed a month because of the epidemic, but oddly, they say nothing at all about the end of the war just a week before. Our church reported 388 members, making it the third largest in the association, behind First of Rocky Mount and the church at Scotland Neck. We gave the value of our church property as \$21,000, less than several others in that respect. Our pastor's salary, however, was behind only that of Scotland Neck and Immanuel Baptist in Greenville. Next year we would host the meeting.

Sunday, November 24, was the day set aside for a Million Dollar Campaign for the endowment of our colleges and schools. The speaker for the morning service was Gilbert T. Stephenson, a prominent banker from Winston-Salem. There was a canvass of the membership during the afternoon, and 123 contributors pledged \$10,692.97. Quite successful, I'd say. We may infer from this that we were a fairly prosperous, educated congregation.

The new year of 1919 could not go anywhere but up after the dreadful year before. We got off to a good start by raising Pastor Kester's salary from eighteen hundred dollars to twenty-four hundred. This may have been occasioned by the pastor having to borrow thirty-five dollars from the church. When we raised the salary we also forgave this debt, which we probably found embarrassing. In February we gave Mr. Richardson a slight raise also.

We had an unpleasant surprise on March 2. After the morning service J. Marcus Kester offered his resignation. He had been offered a call to First Baptist at Shelby, and he wanted to accept it to be near his parents at Kings Mountain during their old age. We accepted the resignation "very reluctantly and with universal regret among the membership." Mr. Kester had steered us with a steady hand through some very rough seas. He had been good for us.

^{7.} The crowds coming together to celebrate the armistice led to a brief resurgence of the flu.

^{8.} WDT, November 11, 1918.

He kept our spirits up during the darkest days of the trench warfare in Europe, and he was there for us when were helplessly watching our loved ones die. His last day with us was Sunday, April 13, 1919.

The Kesters left Wilson for Shelby, North Carolina, where Marcus served as pastor of First Baptist Church until December 1922. He would have been in Shelby when T. W. Chambliss was living there during the O. Max Gardner campaign. Chambliss surely attended Kester's church. They must have had some interesting shop talk about us folks in Wilson. Kester accepted a position as educational secretary for the Foreign Mission Board of the SBC, in Richmond. While there he wrote a few pamphlets on the study of missions. He must have preferred the pastorate, because in 1924 he came back to North Carolina to become pastor of First Baptist in Wilmington.

The Kesters had a big family. Around the time they had their eighth baby, the Wilmington deacons came to him and suggested that eight was enough. He allowed as how it was none of their business, and two more were born.

In 1930 the Sunday School Board published Kester's most substantial work, and only real book, *The Life beyond Death*. In 1933 Wake Forest College gave him an honorary degree, along with Douglas Southall Freeman and Edwin McNeill Poteat. Mighty good company. In 1934 Marcus and Anna took off for England again, apparently leaving the kids at home. They left New York on the *Westernland* on August 12 and arrived at Southampton on August 21. There is no record of when they returned. It was probably just a vacation. They visited the Holy Land while away.

Marcus died young. Influenza was going around again in 1936. Up in Kansas City, T. W. Chambliss died on March 19. Down in Wilmington Dr. Kester fell sick in late February and suffered all the way through that March. On March 4 our church sent Mrs. Kester a telegram assuring her that the people in Wilson were praying for Dr. Kester's recovery. On April 1 he succumbed to the emphysema and pneumonia brought on by the flu. He almost reached his forty-ninth birthday. Ten years later a doctor could have prescribed one of those horrible-tasting gray-green penicillin powders, and he'd probably have come out of it. It wouldn't have helped the flu, but it could have knocked out the pneumonia. The funeral was held at First Baptist in Wilmington. The pastor of Temple Baptist Church of the city and the rector of St. James Episcopal conducted the services.

This left Anna with ten children to take care of. On May 7 the church in Wilmington wrote Mrs. Kester telling her that the church would pay all the bills for the illness and burial of her husband and offering her use of the parsonage until a new pastor should need it. The church soon called Dr. San-

Telegram in possession of Perry James, Raleigh. Copy in church archives.
 J. L. Baldwin, clerk of First Baptist, Wilmington, to Mrs. Anna Elizabeth

key Blanton, pastor of Calvary Baptist in New Haven, Connecticut, as their pastor, to begin in September. The Blantons invited Mrs. Kester to send their twelve-year-old son Truett up to New England to spend the summer with them and their twelve-year-old son. She accepted. At the end of the summer Dr. Blanton wrote Mrs. Kester that although they would be coming down in September, bringing Truett, he was quite willing for her and the family to continue living in the parsonage for as long as a year, until she could make other arrangements.¹¹

Anna could have returned to Boston, but she stayed in Wilmington. Apparently Marcus left a nice insurance policy for her, and she also received a small stipend from the Southern Baptist Relief and Annuity Board (established in 1919). She bought a house, converted the upstairs into an apartment, and made a garage apartment to rent out. She never remarried. During World War II four of her sons were in the service. In 1950 she moved to Charlotte, where several of the children lived and where her son Jack was a practicing surgeon. Jack died in 1970 at Duke while awaiting a kidney transplant. Anna died in Charlotte in 1991 at age ninety-six, healthy almost to the end. Not until near the end was she ever prescribed a medicine, and even then, only one. That woman came from good, stout Scandinavian timber. She would tell folks that when she got to heaven she was going to find that husband of hers and ask him why in the world he went off and left her with ten children! As of this writing, three of the ten Kester children are still living. Truett is in a nursing home in Wilmington. Robert also lives in Wilmington. A daughter, Carolyn, did a lot of work on the family history but lost most of it in 2005, along with just about everything else she owned, when her home in Mississippi was hit by Hurricane Katrina.

Kester, May 7, 1936. Letter in possession of Perry James, Raleigh; copy in our church archives.

^{11.} Everette, A Heritage of Hope, 129, 225.

Chapter 19

The Mercer Years

1919–1927 (Isaac Morton Mercer)

There shall be stability in thy times, abundance of salvation, wisdom, and knowledge.

—ISAIAH 33:6 ASV

F MARCUS KESTER HAD TO LEAVE US, we knew who we wanted to succeed him. No doubt about it. We wanted Isaac Morton Mercer. We knew him well. He had been pastor of First Baptist in Rocky Mount for more than eight years, and during that time he had preached for us several times. He was now at Thomasville. On the same Sunday that Kester offered his resignation, we voted to wire Dr. Mercer and offer him a salary of twenty-four hundred dollars plus parsonage. He accepted, although we might wonder if on his visits to Wilson he had ever spent much time in that parsonage. In April we were still worrying over its needed repairs.

Dr. Mercer had already had a distinguished career in the pastorate when he came to us at age fifty-eight. He was born June 29, 1857, in Richmond, Virginia. He graduated from Richmond College (which later gave him an honorary degree) and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, then did further study at the University of Leipzig in Germany. He was ordained in 1882 at Second Baptist Church in Richmond, a church his great-grandfather helped to found. He had served churches in South Boston, Alexandria, and Richmond, Virginia; Greenville, South Carolina; and Washington, Rocky Mount, and Thomasville in this state. At Rocky Mount he had transformed First Baptist from a struggling congregation to a church with a debt-free



Isaac Morton Mercer (FBC)

new building. His career sounds pretty straightforward, but there had been tragedies. He lost his first wife, Fannie Pearcy. In 1895 he remarried; his new wife was Nannie Andrews Williams of Greenville, South Carolina. Somewhere about that time a son Broadus died in Flat Rock: he drowned while attempting to save someone else.¹

The Mercer family that came to Wilson consisted of Isaac and wife Nannie, with three daughters: Annie, twenty-three; Carolyn, nineteen; and Susanna, nine. A twenty-eight-year-old son, Charles, was a traveling salesman at the time. Dr. Mercer preached his first sermon as pastor on Sunday, May 4, 1919. He joined the church along with Nannie and the two older daughters.

Isaac M. Mercer kept a ledger of his activity while in Wilson. It is a rich source. He gives the title and text for every sermon he gave on two Sunday services and on Wednesdays, with frequent comments about the turnout and the weather. Every guest speaker is named, as well as every meeting away from the church. He kept a separate schedule of which hymns were sung at these services, as well as a record of every marriage he performed: who was married, where the ceremony took place, and how much he received as honorarium. The ledger is in the archives of the Baptist Collection at Wake Forest University among his papers, but copies of the relevant pages are now in our church archives too.²

In August we discussed the 75 Million Campaign, an effort to raise funds for a wide variety of denominational causes. The campaign had been launched at the Southern Baptist Convention in May, and Pastor Mercer strongly supported it. He was never particularly interested in denominational politics, but he supported Southern Baptist causes. The usual technique in the campaign was to get laymen to be "four-minute speakers." This was an idea borrowed from Liberty Bond drives during the war.³ In our own church we established a Literature Fund to supply each church member with a subscription to the *Biblical Recorder* and the SBC publication *Home and Foreign Fields*.

^{1.} Lee, We Remember Our Heritage, 42.

^{2.} Much of the detail in this chapter comes from Mercer's notes in the ledger.

^{3.} McBeth, Baptist Heritage, 619.

There were some problem with an organ, perhaps the new one in the sanctuary or maybe the older one in what was now called the "annex." The manufacturer, W. W. Kimball Company, replied on October 7 to a request from Dr. Mercer that someone come down from Chicago to repair it. The letter is among the Isaac Morton Mercer Papers at the Baptist Collection at Wake Forest University, but it is not preserved for its content. Dr. Mercer was in the habit of scribbling sermon outlines and notes on any kind of scratch paper that happened to be at hand, and it is these notes that are preserved in the papers. This particular letter contains some notes for a sermon on the Christian home that he preached here on September 12, 1920. Usually the scratch paper is more interesting for its own sake than for sermon notes. The trouble with the organ, for instance, is not even mentioned in the church records.

The week of October 19-26 we held another revival. Dr. T. W. O'Kelley, pastor of FBC in Raleigh, was our speaker. These were good times for the community. Tobacco prices were up, which always made Wilsonians feel flush. There were several professions of faith during the meetings. But Sunday, October 26, was one of the saddest and certainly one of the most dramatic days in our history—and, at the same time, one of the days most illustrative of Christian love. Dr. Mercer and Dr. O'Kelley had traded pulpits that morning. While our pastor preached in Raleigh, Dr. O'Kelley preached here, but he had an attack of pain from the gallbladder during the sermon and was not able to finish. He was taken to the parsonage, where he received medical help. Meanwhile, Willard and Mattie Moss had stayed home. Willard had been brooding for some time over an "old nervous condition"—we would probably call it depression—and perhaps this kept him from church. During the eleven o'clock hour he went from the house to the lumberyard he managed, and greeted the watchman on duty, saying he had some bookkeeping work to catch up on. When the guard next made his rounds, he noticed that the office door was open. He investigated and found Mr. Moss on the floor bleeding from a self-inflicted wound to the neck. He telephoned Mrs. Moss, who ran across the street to her neighbor and fellow church member C. W. Stokes. They hurriedly drove to the scene, found Willard still alive, and took him to the hospital. He lived about half an hour, during which time he said that he had also taken poison and "was burning up." He died about one o'clock.4 Dr. Mercer probably received word by telephone while enjoying Sunday dinner at the home of someone from Raleigh's First Baptist. He returned to Wilson during the afternoon and held the Sunday evening service.

The funeral was held the next day at the church, which was filled with friends and fragrant with flowers. Dr. Mercer conducted the service, along

^{4.} WDT, October 27, 1919; Mercer's notes.

with T. W. Chambliss, bless his heart. He was writing a weekly column for the Biblical Recorder to push the 75 Million Campaign and was probably already in Raleigh, given that in a piece he wrote on Moss's death he mentions that Moss had only recently been in his office. If he was in Raleigh, he probably accompanied Mercer back to Wilson. The family had surely asked him to participate. After all, Chambliss almost certainly suffered from depression or anxiety attacks himself. He described himself as having had a "nervous breakdown" in 1910, and could easily have had suicidal thoughts, especially since his son's death in 1918. Chambliss wrote in a brief article that Wilson people had known Willard Moss longer than he but that "none knew him any better than I did. To me he had opened his heart . . . hiding no weaknesses and covering no faults. He was frank with me—I was with him.... He was an optimist—all the days—until disease weakened him."6 Sounds like he understood. Just as people died of influenza before there were antibiotics to fight the attendant pneumonia, there were people who suffered from depression before it was even a medical diagnosis, let alone before a pharmaceutical weapon against it existed. It would be 1955 before the first antidepressant appeared. Antianxiety agents came even later.

The pallbearers for Mr. Moss were his fellow deacons: R. A. Turlington, A. B. Carroll, T. F. Pettus, J. A. Sykes, A. D. McGowan, C. J. Strickland, B. S. Garris, C. E. Blount, G. W. Grady, and J. M. Daniel. Eighteen other prominent men in Wilson served as honorary pallbearers. Willard left his wife Mattie and three boys—Robert, Howell, and Willard Jr. He was buried at Maplewood. The church gathered round the family in support and later would write a lovely memorial, which we will come to later.

In November the Baptist State Convention met in Raleigh; we sent six men as well as Mrs. P. B. Lassiter. Presumably she was one of the ninety-

- 5. Chambliss's earliest correspondence during the O. Max Gardner campaign of 1920 is on his Asheville stationery. He had moved to Shelby by January 1, 1920. He may still have had a home in Asheville at the time of this incident but was certainly staying in Raleigh. It was a bit of an exertion to get to Wilson for the funeral the next day for both Mercer and Chambliss. The road between Zebulon and Wilson was not yet paved, but they could have come by train. I'd guess that he and Mercer were having Sunday dinner together when they learned of the event in Wilson. Chambliss wrote that word came by telegram.
- 6. The Moss family has a clipping of this column. It is not dated or identified, but it appears to be from the *Daily Times* a few days after the funeral. It can't be checked, since copies of the paper for a few days after October 27 were not available for microfilming. The Moss copy is in poor condition, but because of its importance to the story of the church, I have included the article in an appendix to this book. Chambliss was uniquely moved, and he did what newspaper people do when they are moved: he wrote.

six "Lady Visitors" who attended in addition to the 639 messengers. On Thanksgiving Day we had a service at eleven o'clock and took up an offering for the Orphanage. Dr. Mercer would have had a special interest in this, since he had come to us from Thomasville, where he was pastor not only to First Baptist but also to the Orphanage. Sunday, November 30, was the first day of the big 75 Million Campaign. We had a special prayer time at nine o'clock. Pledges to the campaign made during the morning and evening service came to a satisfyingly startling \$43,156. By the end of the year we had pledged \$56,939. This may help to explain why no mention is made in the records of action regarding the organ repair: items that in poorer times would have been subject to church action could now be handled administratively.

The Roaring Twenties got off to a stumbling start up in Boston, when on January 1 the Red Sox traded Babe Ruth off to the Yankees, later to regret it. Two constitutional amendments went into effect in 1920 that would profoundly affect the country. On January 16 the Prohibition Amendment became law, though North Carolina was already dry and would remain so for several years after repeal. On August 26 the Nineteenth Amendment took effect, giving women the right to vote. In September the first commercial radio sets went on sale, and in November we elected Warren G. Harding president. In Wilson, the Cherry Hotel opened for business, and the Tomlinson and Morrison Drug Store was aggressively advertising the new electric Kelvinator "iceless refrigerator."

At First Baptist we got off to a good start. George W. Blount, grandson of *the* George W. Blount and son of Charles Blount, manager of a local drygoods store and second baseman for the Tobs, had returned from service and decided to enter the ministry. On January 7 we commended him: "Having learned with great pleasure of the purpose of our brother George W. Blount to prepare himself for the Gospel Ministry, we hereby gladly express our hearty confidence in his Christian character, his piety & his sincerity of purpose . . . and we lovingly commend him to our College [Wake Forest], our Seminary & our denomination at large."

Meanwhile, the influenza virus had been busy quietly mutating, and it struck again in February 1920. All churches in Wilson were closed from February 8 until February 29. This epidemic was not as severe as the one two years earlier, but it was bad enough. A lot of people in Wilson got sick, including some of our members, Mrs. Sue Pettus among them. A few Wilsonians died, including one of our deacons, who passed away on February 16 after battling the flu for ten days. This was Andrew Dixon McGowen, known as "Mac," a furniture dealer and the local funeral director, who had been a member for twenty years. A long obituary described him as dying "at the

^{7.} Huggins, History of North Carolina Baptists, 344.

time of his greatest efficiency . . . in building up the prosperity of the county and especially the town." He was an active Shriner and Rotarian and member of the chamber of commerce. The funeral was held at the home the next afternoon. Under ordinary circumstances half the city would have attended his funeral, but during the influenza epidemic people were not gathering in large numbers, and public funerals may have been forbidden.⁸

The twenty-ninth was a rare fifth Sunday in a February. We had a guest speaker that night, R. M. Von Miller, the pastor at New Hope. Mr. Von Miller was actually a member of ours who joined in 1919. He probably did not know it, but the FBI had a file on him as an "alleged suspicious character." It consists of an unidentified and undated newspaper clipping, a rather long letter to the editor he wrote during World War I, when he was pastor at Four Oaks. (The paper may have been the *Kenly News.*) Von Miller was born in 1870 in Germany, and since 1917, when the United States went to war, he had been the object of suspicion, persistent accusations, and rumors of disloyalty. He wrote the letter to protest, to underscore his loyalty to the United States, and to ask for "fair play" for any American born in Germany. The sad thing is that the Bureau of Investigations (as it was known then) surely did not monitor the local papers in Johnston County, so someone who knew Von Miller had to have sent them that clipping. The bureau probably paid no attention to it, but it would have been irresponsible for them not to file it."

A revival meeting started April 4, with J. Clyde Turner from Greensboro doing the preaching and J. Furman Betts of Raleigh leading the singing. The choice of Turner (as well as O'Kelley earlier) as a revival speaker shows the kind of man Mercer wanted preaching from our pulpit. Turner spent thirty-eight years as pastor of FBC in Greensboro (1910–1948) and served as president of the state convention from 1919 to 1932. He was the author of seven books. Here was a serious person, a real pastor, an able preacher, but no Bible-thumper. Sixteen professions of faith were made at this meeting.

The church had been hard hit by the sudden loss of two of its stalwarts, W. M. Moss and A. D. McGowen. A long resolution in their honored memory was composed, and it was passed by the church on Sunday, April 25. By this time in our history, such resolutions on death of a member were rare. But the loss of two leaders in such a short time couldn't be ignored, and the church was not going to respond to McGowen's death without also responding to Moss's. The circumstances of death had been different, but as far as the church was concerned, a tragic suicide and a death from influenza deserved equally fond memorials. The church was clearly long past the old medieval

^{8.} WDT, February 17, 1920.

^{9.} National Archives publication no. M1085, "Old German Files," 1909–1921, case no. 8000–145949, roll no. 537, p. 17, available at Footnote.com.

notion that a person who killed himself was damned to hell. Never before in the church's history had the congregation been called on to express such loving concern to a family, and we were up to the challenge. We believed in the grace of God.

In May 1920 Mr. Richardson filled the pulpit for us while the pastor was in Washington, DC, to attend the Southern Baptist Convention. The convention dealt with the success of the 75 Million Campaign—it had not actually met the goal, but it had raised a lot of money. They called it the "Victory Convention" and appointed a Conservation Committee to keep the effort alive. Within a few years the Cooperative Program would develop out of this. At this meeting there were problems with proper credentials. The number of people attending the conventions was becoming larger, and both the sheer size and the length of reports from various organization were becoming obstacles to conducting efficient sessions.¹⁰

On September 16 there was a terrorist attack on Wall Street: a horse-drawn wagon loaded with dynamite exploded, killing forty-eight people and wounding around four hundred. We would call it an IED, or improvised explosive device. Back then they called it an "infernal machine." The perpetrators, probably anarchists, were never identified. Random bombings like this happened from time to time back then.

We hadn't heard much about the Pender Street mission for a while. Back in July Mr. Turlington resigned as Sunday School superintendent over there, and Mrs. B. S. Ward took his place. On December 1 we turned the work at Pender Street over to a committee. Mr. Von Miller from New Hope was going to start preaching there, and we'd need to give him some compensation.

On December 18 our choir sang a Christmas cantata called "The Manger Prince." Dr. Mercer noted that the church was packed and the music beautifully sung. There's no way to know who conducted it and/or played the organ, but the music for that cantata cost sixty cents a copy, so clearly First Baptist felt flush enough to put a little money into the music program.

The new year of 1921 began with an act of charity. As a result of the war, people were starving in Europe, and our church collected \$572.50 for the children in need "over there." When the sum was announced, K. H. Watson wrote a check for \$27.50 to make it an even \$600.

On March 20 the assistant pastor, W. C. Richardson, resigned to take a church at West Albemarle. Mr. Richardson had served faithfully and well since his arrival in 1916. He helped with the founding of the Five Points Church, worked with us at Pender Street, and did what he could to help us out at Pine and Nash. Mrs. Richardson had been an important addition to the Woman's Missionary Society. The ladies passed a warmly appreciative

resolution in her honor: "that in Mrs. Richardson we lose one of our wisest and most faithful leaders, that her example of consecrated living will ever be an inspiration to the women of our church."

One of the biggest revival meetings in our history took place April 24—May 8, 1921. R. D. Garland of the Home Mission Board in Richmond, a former pastor of FBC New Bern, did the preaching, and the pastor of the church at Wendell, L. B. Padgett, came over to lead the singing. There were forty-four additions, among them thirty professions of faith.

From July through August 28 we held union services on Sunday nights along with the Christian, Methodist, Presbyterian, and Episcopal churches. During these meetings pastors would exchange pulpits, and all members would gather at the one church holding the meeting. Our Dr. Mercer preached at the Presbyterian Church on July 24 and at the Christian Church on August 14. On August 28 the series was to close with a sermon by Dr. Len G. Broughton, a well-known Baptist pastor and evangelist. He was born in Wake County and practiced medicine in Wilson (where he married Roxana Barnes) and Reidsville until deciding to go into the ministry. He was highly successful, especially with Tabernacle Baptist in Atlanta, and even pastored a church in London for a couple of years. He wrote many books. In August 1921 he was pastor at FBC in Knoxville. Dr. Broughton took sick on Saturday night, however, and Mercer preached for him at the evening service on August 28. It is a tribute to our standing in the denomination and our pastor's influence that we could attract a man of Broughton's standing.

The first week of November we cancelled services on Sunday and Wednesday nights so that we could attend the week-long Bible conference being held at the Methodist Church by none other than G. Campbell Morgan, who at the time was probably the best-known preacher in the English-speaking world and was author of around seventy books. He was a Congregationalist with a church in London, but he made almost annual trips to the United States for such Bible meetings as this. Wilson was indeed honored, and Isaac M. Mercer was not going to let an opportunity like this pass by. The *Daily Times* gave the meeting extensive coverage each day.

Wilsonians will remember 1921 as the year that Dick's Hot Dog Stand opened for business. One of the most popular songs of the next year, 1922, was "Carolina in the Morning." Popular artists would be recording it for the next thirty years. In Wilson, local grocers faced chain store competition for the first time in 1922, when an A&P opened at 114 South Goldsboro. Heretofore, grocers had put modest little want-ad-sized notices in the papers: Carroll's has "a nice new shipment of granulated sugar," or "nice fat country

chickens." A&P placed large ads of a quarter page or so with their weekly specials. Good for the *Daily Times* if not for local grocers.

We began our own new year by lending our auditorium to "our friends and neighbors" of the First Presbyterian Church of Wilson to hold a three-week protracted meeting of their own in January, featuring the preaching of a well-known Presbyterian evangelist, J. Ernest Thacker. Dr. Mercer recorded in his notes: "Fine preaching, good music, excellent congⁿ, great crowds on Sundays. A splendid meeting!"

Our spring meeting of 1922 ran from April 9 through 23. Once again we got Brother Padgett to lead the singing. Our guest preacher was the pastor at Wake Forest Baptist Church, A. Paul Bagby. We will be hearing more about Dr. Bagby later. Fifteen came seeking baptism, and a few more moved their letters.

The treasurer reported in May that we were behind in some payments, so the deacons appointed a committee of men and ladies to help in "the collection of dues." By June 1 we had \$417.34 on hand, but a generous gift of \$489.50 was received from George Grady, a furniture dealer and member since 1911. The Revival Fund amounted to \$13, for a total of \$919.85. Disbursements amounted to \$875.97, leaving a balance on July 1 of \$43.88. Of the disbursements, the largest (\$456.75) was to the Town of Wilson for street paving. The pastor was paid \$250. There were smaller expenses for lighting, sexton, insurance, music, and printing, and to three ladies who apparently played the organ for the services. Later in July we had to put out \$265 for repair to the windows in the church. The Finance Committee said they were going to get the church out of debt and keep it that way.

On June 12 we lost a stalwart member, C. J. Strickland, a sixty-five-yearold hardware merchant. The church honored him with a special resolution to be given to his children. It is not recorded in the church minutes, but a carbon copy is inserted at the proper place in the ledger.

On Sunday, July 23, we formally organized the Pender Street Baptist Church. We granted a number of letters of dismission to members who would be the first members of Pender Street, and also made financial arrangements for Pender Street to pay off its own debt, whereupon the property would be deeded to the new church from First Baptist. In September we elected six new deacons, bringing the total to sixteen. They were ordained October 29, and the sermon at that service was preached by Livingston Johnson, former secretary of the state convention.

On February 25, 1923, we voted to have deacons serve terms of four years. The revival meeting of April 1 (Easter Sunday) through April 13, 1923, was a community affair. Simultaneous evangelistic services were held in the evenings at the Christian, Episcopal, Presbyterian, Methodist, and Baptist churches, with union services at First Baptist each morning. "Fine meet-

ings and fine spirit of coopⁿ," wrote Mercer in his ledger. He reported "about 35" professions of faith, apparently referring to the citywide count. We had around twenty, though. Our guest speaker was Zeno Wall, the pastor of FBC in Goldsboro and a rising star in the Baptist firmament. He had served as a military chaplain during World War I, would be president of the Baptist State Convention from 1933 to 1936, and was one of the founders of what is now Gardner-Webb University.

In May the Ladies' Aid Society took it on themselves to pay the church's obligation to the city for paving the streets. In July the churches held their union services again on Sunday evenings. The Rev. E. W. Baxter, rector of St. Timothy's Episcopal, preached at our church on Sunday night, July 8. Later in July Brother Mercer went to Mars Hill to attend a conference, and our own young George W. Blount preached for us. He was probably on a summer break from his studies. When Isaac Mercer returned, we surprised him with a new Ford coupe.

Beginning with the minutes of September 2, another hand is recording the minutes in the ledger. It is a sign of the times that this person had learned penmanship by the Palmer method. At the business meeting Wednesday night, September 11, 1923, there was a full slate of interesting items. The treasurer reported that he was satisfied with the way things were going. The Board of Deacons (this may be the first time that term is used) recommended a slate of officers for the church and Sunday School for the next year. This had always been done at the last meeting of the calendar year. Apparently the church year was now being shifted to begin in October. This may reflect an organization of the Sunday School into a quarterly system, one closer to that of the public school schedule. The House Committee consisted of two ladies; Mrs. George A. Barefoot was the chair. The Finance Committee consisted of thirty-one people! Nine women among them. These are probably the individuals charged with going to people's homes and businesses to raise funds for the church budget. Miss Lucille Magette was named as choir leader, the first time such an office is noted, though obviously someone must have been leading the choir. This may indicate that the church was attaching more importance to it. This evening we had an election by paper ballots for four deacons. 12 We reelected the four men whose terms had just expired:

^{12.} This is the first time secret ballots are specified. It was a political issue in North Carolina at the time. Early voting in the United States had been by voice vote, or some other way in which all votes were cast in public. Voter intimidation was easy. The "Australian ballot" used universally in the United States today (except by those states that hold caucuses rather than primary elections)—a secret vote on printed forms listing the candidates and provided by the state—had been adopted by most states by this time, but North Carolina did not adopt it until 1929. The

R. L. Patrick, J. M. Daniel, J. A. Sykes, and George W. Grady were elected for a four-year term.

At this meeting an important and telling resolution was adopted:

Whereas it is becoming more and more evident that our Church building is inadequate for the realization of the larger and better service in all departments of Christian life and activity that this Church desires to render, therefore, Be it resolved:

First: That the Board of Deacons and the Finance Committee be requested to form a committee on Church Building to study and investigate the whole question of an enlarged improvement [sic] building, either at the present site or elsewhere, and report their findings to the Church, together with such recommendations as they may see fit to make.

Second: That in the meantime this joint committee be empowered to create and collect a Church fund, using such plans & methods in presenting and collecting same as may seem best in their judgement.

We had occupied the building at Pine and Nash for less than seventeen years, and already it was inadequate. Structural defects had been evident almost from the beginning. Now it was beginning to feel cramped. The resolution speaks of "departments of Christian life and activity." This would have been utterly meaningless to the people meeting at the courthouse on May 6, 1860, to form a Baptist church. The church had grown from a meeting house into an institution with administrative demands for space and management skills. In 1922 we reported to the association a membership of 477. This year we reported 507. Next year we would report 626.

Sunday, November 11, was Armistice Day. The pastor's text was Luke 2:14, the title of the sermon "World Peace." He reported a "splendid congregation."

For the first time, there is indication in the church records of Christmas festivity. The church entertained the choir at the Cherry Hotel on a Friday evening in December. On Sunday, December 23, 1923, we had the first "White Christmas" service on record. It was held at the eleven o'clock service. The morning was rainy, but attendance was good. Gifts of money and merchandise were presented to be given to the poor. Dr. Mercer kept his outline of the service (in which he uses the abbreviation "Xmas" for Christmas). It should be noted that this use of the phrase "White Christmas" predates the song, which was not written until 1940. Maybe hearing about "White Christmas"

church probably did not provide printed ballots, but the point is that they were marked and cast in secret.

services in churches gave Irving Berlin, a Jewish immigrant from Russia, the idea.

Good times continued into 1924. In April we discussed the remodeling of Sunday School rooms but came to no decision, though the month before we had had to repair a door to the Philathea classroom. A business meeting held April 16 had some interesting features. We learn that the Baptist Young People's Union was divided into senior, junior, and intermediate groups, meeting Monday nights, with a combined membership of forty-eight. The Woman's Missionary Society collected over \$64 for the 75 Million Campaign and reported having made twenty-eight visits to the sick and having sent thirteen baskets, seven flower arrangements, and two "boxes." The Ladies' Aid Society was still in existence, with a fat treasury of \$115.46. They had apparently been raising money by serving suppers, but nothing is said about when or how often. There was a report by C. V. Garner, president of the Men's Club and a local grocer. This is the first evidence of a men's organization at First Baptist.

The entire month of June, from Sunday, June 1, through Tuesday, July 8, the city was transfixed by a big citywide revival held by "the Ham and the Ram"—the evangelistic team of Mordecai F. Ham, preacher, and J. M. Ramsey, song leader. First Baptist dismissed all evening services during this time and even let out the Sunday morning service on July 6. Sometimes two thousand people would gather in what the newspaper referred to as "the tabernacle," which was in fact Farmers Warehouse. The sermons were reported in the Daily Times at some length, sometimes with front-page headlines.¹³ Outof-town groups from Greenville and other places came to Wilson, and sometimes there was spontaneous preaching on the streets outside the Cherry Hotel after the meeting let out. The services were supposed to end on Sunday, July 6, but they decided to extend the revival by two more days—one service in the morning, another in the evening, and preaching in local stores in the afternoon. Response was good. By the end of July Dr. Mercer had baptized seventy-two people into the church. One of these was a fourteen-year-old lad named Ollie Owens, whom we will meet again in chapter 21. Apparently when people came forward at the end of Ham's meetings, their names were taken and distributed to local clergy. In Dr. Mercer's papers there is a form letter dated July 29, telling the recipient that his or her name had been given him from the Ham-Ramsey meeting and assuring them that he would be glad to meet with them. The letter is preserved only as scratch paper on which he happened to have scribbled some sermon notes. Although Ham and Ramsey

^{13.} Unfortunately, the *WDT* does not exist on microfilm for June 1924. The references here are only for the few days of July, but after several weeks, the meeting was strong enough to continue to be news. The audiences were probably the largest gatherings of people in Wilson's history to that date.

were Baptists, this was not a Baptist meeting in the sense that it was sponsored by First Baptist or any other church. The team simply rented the space, advertised, and came, the same as a circus would. One gets the impression that Dr. Mercer's attitude was much like that of Baptists to the Second Great Awakening (chapter 2). There was something about it he wasn't comfortable with, but he was willing to cooperate and had to admit that the revivalists were bringing people into the churches.¹⁴

Other things were going on in the nation at the same time. From June 24 to July 9 the longest political convention in American history was taking place in Madison Square Garden, as the Democrats took 103 ballots to nominate John W. Davis and Charles Bryan as their candidates for the November elections. The Ku Klux Klan, in its powerful second incarnation, succeeded in having an anti-KKK measure struck from the party platform. For the first time, a woman's name was placed in nomination for vice president. While this excitement was going on in New York, the country's attention was focused on a tragedy unfolding in Washington. President Coolidge's sixteen-year-old son, Calvin, had played a game of tennis on the White House court without wearing socks. He developed a blister, it became infected, and the boy became deathly ill, and on July 7 he died. Young Calvin's grandfather back in Vermont learned of it on the radio.

On July 21 John T. Scopes was found guilty of violating the law by teaching evolution in the high school in Dayton, Tennessee. The Treasury Department reported that the income tax on millionaires had brought in nearly \$2 billion in the last two years. Citizens making enough money to pay taxes amounted to 6.2 percent of the population. Of these, 67 individuals made over \$1 million a year, and another 161 reported incomes between \$500,000 and \$1 million. People were singing the new hits: "Tea for Two," "Sweet Georgia Brown," and "Five Foot Two, Eyes of Blue"—happy, carefree, optimistic songs.

In September, at our annual election of new officers, four new deacons were voted in. For whatever reason, the moderator (Dr. Mercer) announced that "any male member in good standing" was eligible. It had always been taken for granted that deacons were going to be men, but maybe Dr. Mercer felt that could no longer be assumed. Our auditorium must have been cold. On December 7 we authorized the purchase of furnaces. On Sunday, December 21, we had our White Christmas service. This was becoming an

^{14.} Thomas C. Parramore, longtime history professor at Meredith, devotes a chapter in his state history for high schools to the 1924 Ham-Ramsey meeting in Elizabeth City and to the fundamentalist-modernist controversy. *Carolina Quest*, 351–366.

^{15.} WDT, July 9, 1924. The Sixteenth Amendment, authorizing an income tax on individuals, took effect in 1913.

annual event. A nice collection of goods and money was raised to be given to the Wilson Relief Association.

We were still feeling flush in 1925. On February 11 we determined that come March 1 we would vote on whether to authorize the Board of Deacons and the Finance Committee to decide on the location of a new church. That didn't mean another mission; it meant a new location for First Baptist. On March 1 we did authorize them (plus the trustees) to get options on a location and then let the congregation decide what to do.

April brought a disturbing development. There were no services on Sunday the 26th. Dr. Mercer had left on the preceding Friday to take Mrs. Mercer to St. Luke's Hospital in Richmond. Their twenty-eight-year-old daughter, Annie, went along. Dr. Mercer returned on Friday, May 1, and the two ladies returned May 6. On Friday, June 12, Mercer and daughter Carolyn (twentyfour years old) took Mrs. Mercer back to St. Luke's, but he returned alone in time for church on Sunday. The church record indicates that on Sunday, June 21, a funeral for Bro. L. O. Griffin was held "in the absence of Dr. Mercer in Richmond, Va., with Mrs. Mercer." The date must be a mistake. In Mercer's ledger he is present and accounted for on June 21, but he records that there were no services on June 28 because he left the previous Friday "to see Mrs. Mercer" and that he returned Thursday, July 2. On August 2 and 9 there were no services other than Sunday School and Wednesday prayer meeting, since the pastor was again in Richmond with his wife, Nannie. He went up on Friday, July 31, and they returned together on August 13. Carolyn and his son Charles accompanied them. Charles was thirty-four, living in Cleveland, Ohio. Annie and the youngest daughter, Susanna (age fourteen), came in from Winston-Salem the same day. Nannie's sister, Mrs. Douglas, also came up from Chester, South Carolina, that day.

Nannie Mercer had cancer and was failing. On Wednesday, October 21, the prayer meeting was led by "the brethren," and on Sunday O. L. Stringfield (chapter 14) held the services. There were no Wednesday night activities on the 28th. Mrs. Mercer died on Thursday afternoon at one o'clock. The funeral was held at the church the next morning. Dr. C. E. Maddry, secretary of the Baptist State Convention; J. W. Kincheloe, pastor of FBC Rocky Mount; and our own R. M. Von Miller conducted the services. A quartet from the choir sang "Jesus, Lover of My Soul," "How Firm a Foundation," and "Abide with Me." The Board of Deacons were pallbearers. Among the floral tributes was one from the Baptist Orphanage in Thomasville. Three of the deacons—A. B. Carroll, J. W. House, and C. V. Garner—accompanied the family to Richmond, where Nannie was laid to rest in the Hollywood Cemetery. 16

^{16.} WDT, October 29, 30, 1925; Mercer's notes. Mrs. Mercer's death is not mentioned in the church records.

Dr. Perry Case of Atlantic Christian College preached for us on November 1, and O. L. Stringfield returned to conduct services on November 8. By Wednesday night the pastor was back on the job. His secretary resigned as of the end of the year. Back in May we had voted to "elect" Miss Grace Thomas as "assistant" to the pastor. This is probably what we could call a secretary. She does not seem to have been a member of the church, so we were presumably paying her a salary. It was another sign that the business side of church life was growing.

Dr. Mercer had another issue to deal with while all this was going on. At the time the Southern Baptist Convention was being roiled by a theological controversy stirred up by J. Frank Norris, pastor of FBC in Fort Worth. Norris accused the denominational leadership, especially men in the seminaries and colleges, of being "modernists" (bear in mind this was soon after the Scopes trial). Norris's followers were proud to accept the tag of "fundamentalist" and aimed to split the denomination. Norris took particular exception to the 75 Million Campaign. He was a severely divisive figure who was eventually, for practical purposes, ousted from the Southern Baptist Convention. One of Norris's supporters was A. C. Dixon, who had preached a revival for us during Mr. Jenkins's tenure and who could have been partially responsible for the troubles in the church then. North Carolina Baptists faced the fundamentalist-modernist controversy most acutely over the evolution issue. It began with an attack on William Lewis Poteat of Wake Forest by T. T. Martin, the Mississippi evangelist who had held a revival for us in 1912. It developed into a heated debate wherein fundamentalists equated "modernists" (evolutionists) with communists. The debate worked its way into the SBC and came to a head in the convention of 1926, when the president, G. W. McDaniel, made a statement that "this convention" opposes any form of evolutionary teaching but went on to urge the people to quit arguing over it. They did, and an effort to make an anti-evolution statement an official part of Southern Baptist doctrine failed. The issue also arose in our state government, where the legislature in 1925 was confronted with a bill to forbid the teaching of evolution. Certain Baptist leaders opposed it: William Lewis Poteat, Richard Vann of Meredith (whom we met checking out our revival in chapter 8), and Livingston Johnson, editor of the Biblical Recorder. The bill did not pass. 17 A good many prominent Baptist leaders were comfortable enough with the idea of evolution, as long as it was theistic. A. T. Robertson of Southern Seminary, one of the world's leading New Testament scholars of the time, said: "I am willing to believe in [evolution], I rather do, but not in atheistic evolution. . . . What if [God] did use evolution? I can stand it if the

^{17.} Gatewood, "The Evolution Controversy in North Carolina"; Linder, "William Lewis Poteat and the Evolution Controversy."

monkeys can."¹⁸ The issue died down after the fundamentalists found another bone to chew on: the nomination of an Irish Catholic for president in 1928. Norris then devoted his heart and soul to opposing Al Smith's candidacy.

Our church would not have been spared this trouble, and it is hard to imagine Dr. Mercer not meeting the issue head-on and squarely on the side of Southern Baptist loyalists, supportive of the 75 Million Campaign and denominational institutions. His career as a Baptist educator after leaving Wilson would certainly point in that direction. On January 31, 1926, he preached a sermon called "What Is a Fundamentalist?" on the text 1 Corinthians 3:11: "For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (ASV). The second week in February he taught a study course titled "The People Called Baptists," in which he is bound to have raised subjects of current controversy.

The Southern Baptist Convention was having a hard time financially during these years. Agricultural prices across the South dropped dramatically after the war, partly accounting for the failure of the 75 Million Campaign to reach its goal. Southern Baptists were still a predominantly rural people. Frank Norris was highly distractive. A high official of the Home Mission Board was found to have embezzled almost a million dollars of its funds. The convention had to borrow money, renegotiate loans, and take drastic measures to avoid bankruptcy. The end result, fiercely opposed by Norris and his fundamentalists, was the creation in 1925 of the Cooperative Program, an efficient, convention-wide system for collecting, budgeting, and distributing donations forwarded from the churches. In 1925 Dr. Mercer succeeded in raising just over five thousand dollars for the program from our church, a staggering sum. We would not reach that amount again until 1956. During the Great Depression we would hit a low of \$306.

The first important matter to deal with in 1926 was the possible purchase of new property. The deacons, finance committee, and trustees had located two adjoining properties at the corner of Nash and Daniel Streets that we could purchase for \$16,350. On February 7 we voted to do so, and at a meeting one week later the members present pledged \$9,500. April was revival time. This year we held simultaneous meetings with the Methodist Church. The preacher was J. A. Ellis from Pullen Memorial in Raleigh, the first of Pullen's pastors to be deeply involved with social concerns. Our choir led the music, and Dr. Mercer reported fine preaching, with thirty-seven received for baptism—mostly our boys and girls, including eleven-year-old Kathleen Creech, whom we will meet later. There were a few transfers of letters.

^{18.} Quoted in James J. Thompson, Jr., *Tried as by Fire*, 118. Thompson devotes a chapter (101–136) to the evolution controversy, and another (137–165) to the Norris phenomenon.

There was some sadness forming a parenthesis around the revival. On March 5 a thirty-two-year-old baker in our church, Thomas L. Wyatt, died of the flu at Carolina General Hospital. His twenty-nine-year-old wife, Anna, a New Jersey girl born to German immigrants, died at the hospital of the flu on April 16. Both were buried in Thomas's hometown in Georgia.

At the evening service June 13, 1926, we held the ordination of George W. Blount. One of his professors at WFC, the noted W. R. Cullom, who taught Bible there from 1896 to 1938, was the preacher. He was a supporter of Poteat during the evolution controversy. In fact, he was just as much an evolutionist as Poteat, but he wasn't as visible a target and was on friendly terms with some of the conservative leaders, so he escaped heresy charges. Also participating in the service were W. O. Rosser and D. L. Vernon. After college, Blount attended Yale Divinity School and was placed with several Congregationalist churches, including one in Chattanooga. He wanted to return to North Carolina, and did so as a Methodist minister. His father, Charles, had died by this time, and his mother had always been a Methodist, so he joined her and served several eastern North Carolina churches, the last in Raleigh.

Dr. Mercer wrote in his ledger that a Vacation Bible School (VBS) was held from June 14 through July 4 for children from six to twelve years old. This is the first mention of a VBS I have found. He reported an enrollment of 120 and an average attendance of over 100. In July there was an ominous event: a piece of material fell from the church steeple to the sidewalk, and the appropriate committee was charged with determining how much danger this represented, and what repairs the steeple might need. The building was only twenty years old.

We began 1927 by deciding to give Bibles to all young people of the church who had had perfect attendance over the past year. The April revival, this time with the Methodist and Presbyterian churches, featured J. T. Riddick of Norfolk. Twenty-three were received for baptism. In May young Charles Lindbergh flew solo across the Atlantic.

On June 29 Dr. Mercer turned seventy years old, making him the oldest of any of our pastors since William Hooper came to Wilson way back in 1867. He must have been getting tired. Sunday, July 24, is the last Sunday Mercer recorded in that ledger that he had faithfully kept ever since coming to us. Our pastors usually took a vacation in August, and Mercer must have used this month to do some serious thinking. On Sunday, September 11, Dr. Mercer asked the congregation to stay after church a minute, and then he read a letter of resignation, to take effect at the end of the month. The deacons later recommended accepting the resignation, but when we voted as a congrega-

tion on September 18, five voted to accept and over two hundred to refuse. However, Mercer's mind was made up.

Sunday evening, September 25, Pastor Mercer preached his last sermon to First Baptist of Wilson. The place was jam-packed; the Sunday School room adjoining the sanctuary was opened up, and chairs were placed in the aisles. The sermon text was Philippians 4:23: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen." Other ministers in town were present, and when Mercer concluded the message, Euclid McWhorter, pastor of First Methodist, rose and called on the others to express their tribute. The rector of St. Timothy's, E. W. Baxter, spoke of the strong friendship he and his friend Mercer had developed. John Barclay of the Christian Church spoke of "the high and holy atmosphere which seemed to surround Dr. Mercer in his contact with human souls." E. C. Lynch of the Presbyterian Church was the newest of the city's pastors, but he too gave a warm farewell.²⁰ Dr. Mercer was present for the prayer meeting on Wednesday. He spoke on "The Spirit of Jesus" and baptized G. T. Fulghum and E. A. Matthews. Rosa Owens of the Philathea class presented him with a handsome watch, and A. B. Carroll presented him with a check for several hundred dollars, a love offering taken by the members since Sunday.

Wilson was Mercer's last pastorate. On leaving us, he worked with the Baptist State Convention in the field of education for a few years, then went to Meredith College to join the Religion Department. Promoted to associate professor in 1934, he continued to teach until his retirement in 1940. An article by Mary Lynch Johnson in Charity and Children described his teaching in a way that probably also described his pastorate in Wilson: "His delightful personality, his quick mind, and above all, his gentleness of spirit endeared him to students and faculty. . . . His chapel talks, like his sermons, were sound in structure and theology; without being sentimental they moved the hearts of his hearers. . . . The earnestness and beauty of his prayers brought those with whom he prayed into the very presence of God."21 In another place the same writer said of him, "His courtesy was proverbial on campus. Instead of asking a question, he gently requested an answer, supplying it himself if the student momentarily hesitated.²² He is remembered at Meredith today by the Mercer-Kesler Lectureship, established by his daughters Annie Mercer Kesler and Carolyn Morton Mercer in his honor.

^{20.} *WDT*, September 26, 1927.

^{21.} Mary Lynch Johnson, "Dr. Isaac M. Mercer," *Charity and Children,* March 20, 1941. This was also published as an obituary in the *BR*.

^{22.} Johnson, *History of Meredith College*, 193–194. See also Crook, *Symmetry*, 28–31. Crook mistakenly has Mercer coming to Meredith after leaving the pastorate at Rocky Mount rather than at Wilson.

After a five-month illness, Professor Mercer died at age eighty-three on February 23, 1941, at his home in Raleigh, a block south of where Cameron Village is today. He lived three doors down the street from the house where T. W. and Mamie Chambliss had lived during their stay in Raleigh in the 1920s. His unmarried daughter, Susanna, continued to live there until her death the next year; she died of the flu at age thirty-one in Rex Hospital, March 17, 1942. Father Isaac and daughter Susanna are buried beside Nannie at Hollywood Cemetery in Richmond.

Isaac Morton Mercer was good for us, and we owe a lot of what we are today to his wise leadership during a crucial period. The church grew in numbers and began its search for more adequate facilities for its burgeoning programs. He provided a steadying hand during a time of great stress in the Southern Baptist Convention and among North Carolina Baptists and kept us squarely on the moderate path of cooperative work with other Baptists, steering clear of theological extremes. He showed us how to work with other denominations by his cooperative endeavors with other churches in Wilson. He was a strong preacher and a beloved pastor, a thoughtful man. It's hard to imagine him preaching "snappy sermons." Isaac Morton Mercer was going to be a very tough act to follow.

Chapter 20

Hard Times

1928-1933 (A. Paul Bagby, Oscar W. Blount)

The good years will not be remembered in the land because of the famine that follows, for it will be very severe.

—GENESIS 41:31 NEB

Where to turn. There was no one out there whom we knew we wanted, as had been the case with Dr. Mercer and Mr. Blanchard, and no one to give us an inside tip, as Sidney Edgerton had apparently done for Marcus Kester. So the committee, appointed September 28, 1927, took its time.

In the months before a new pastor came, we had a string of guest preachers, and only one or two of them appeared more than once. They came from all over the state and elsewhere, something made possible these days by the automobile. Francis Gaines, the new president of Wake Forest College, came a couple of Sundays. The college's former president, William Louis Poteat, still famous for defending Darwinian evolution, also came. One of the more interesting characters to show up was Oscar Haywood, identified in the minutes as being from New York, but at the time living down in Montgomery County. Early in the decade he had indeed been in New York City, associated with Calvary Baptist Church and Baptist Church of the Covenant, but as a Klokard (lecturer) for the resurgent Ku Klux Klan, he stirred up quite a lot of controversy and was thrown out of Calvary Baptist. The KKK was a powerful force in American politics during the 1920s—nationwide, not just in the South. It was part of a large-scale reaction against immigrants, particularly

Catholics and Jews, and also fired by fears of Negro emigration from the rural South to the urban North. Haywood later returned to North Carolina and won a seat in the General Assembly, where in 1927 he surprisingly cosponsored a bill to outlaw secret, hooded organizations. At one time he was in demand as a lecturer, under contract to the Central Lyceum Bureau of Chicago. He spoke for us in March 1928, while there was a lot of talk about New York governor Al Smith running for president that year. Since Smith was an Irish Catholic, feeling was running high against him in the conservative solidly Democratic South, and Haywood may have had some thoughts to express on that, even from a pulpit on Sunday. There is no reason to think that we at FBC were any purer than the rest of America on questions of race and Catholic immigration.

Olin T. Binkley of Wake Forest College, later president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, spoke for us on April 1, the day the pulpit search committee reported. They recommended we call Dr. A. Paul Bagby, pastor of Wake Forest Baptist, who had held a revival for us in 1922. We called him and he accepted, with duties to begin June 3.

Paul Bagby was born February 4, 1880, in Russellville, Kentucky, where his father was a Baptist preacher. The Bagbys were an old Tidewater Virginia family from King and Queen County. That group of Bagbys produced several Baptist preachers and missionaries. Olive E. Bagby, probably a cousin of Paul's, spent her career as a missionary in China. Another group of the family were early missionaries in Brazil. For his college work Paul went to the University of Richmond, where he played football, baseball, and tennis. Then it was off to Southern Baptist Seminary in Louisville. He earned a ThD there, making him the first of our pastors to hold an earned doctorate. He was ordained to the ministry by Broadway Baptist Church of Louisville in June 1906, and in October that year he married Lula Strother in Louisville. Dr. Bagby served as pastor of Highland Baptist Church in Louisville and later of FBC of Glasgow, Kentucky. He was pastor of Wake Forest Baptist Church when we called him away. Paul and Lula had two children when they arrived in Wilson in 1928: Mabel, who was eighteen, and Paul, Jr., fourteen.

The Bagbys did not have to live in the old parsonage. While we were negotiating with him, we offered him the use of either the old house or the

^{1.} Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism*, 95–96, 254–255; *Greensboro Daily News*, August 25, 1940. By this time the more extreme activities and claims of the Klan had tarnished its reputation, and it was meeting stiff resistance in the South as well as the rest of the country. This second KKK always had its major strength outside the South.

An undated four-page circular advertising his availability can be seen at www.starnesjewelers.com/operahouse/shows/haywood.pdf.

Paul Bagby (Little River [NC] Baptist Association—Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Archives)



house we owned on Daniel Street. He chose the Daniel Street house, and we began using the old parsonage on Pine Street as Sunday School space. When June 1 came, the family had not yet moved, because Dr. Bagby drove all the way from Wake Forest that evening to address the Men's Club at FBC. It was a festive occasion. Mrs. Virginia Cawthon sang some numbers,³ and the Boys' Choir performed. The ladies provided a chicken supper, with strawberry shortcake for dessert. It was the largest attendance the Men's Club had ever had, with many visitors, all to welcome and take the measure of the new pastor. He made a good impression. He told jokes on himself, admitting that he wasn't apt to look very promising to a search committee. He told of a committee from Charlotte meeting him one time, when the immediate disappointment of the members on seeing this small man was evident. But we took to him. At the close of the program the president of the club, J. M. Fitzgerald, proposed that the men of the church prepare a chicken supper for the ladies. That got an enthusiastic response, and it was arranged. Those who could would cook; those who couldn't would serve. There was room in the old church building, now called the annex, for a group to gather for a meal. There was no kitchen, but Mrs. Mercer had earlier offered her kitchen in the parsonage next door for such affairs, and her successors would have

^{3.} Virginia was the twenty-one-year-old daughter of Frank Hufty, who taught voice at Atlantic Christian College. She described herself as a singer and was living with her parents. They appear not to have been members of FBC.

^{4.} WDT, June 2, 1928.

found it hard not to continue. Much of the food was probably brought in from homes.

Dr. Bagby was an active man, a scholar, and a good golfer. He liked people, and his sermons tended to be quiet and challenging, not physically animated.⁵

We weren't quite satisfied with the system of electing deacons. We changed it in June so that the four going off the board would not be eligible for reelection for another four years. Dr. Bagby may have been behind some other changes being made in the administration of church affairs. We decided not to use the duplex envelopes anymore. Instead, all donations would go into a general fund, but the church would have a budget to direct the allocation of our contributions to particular purposes. A Budget Committee was appointed, consisting of "three good business men and two women." (I believe this is the first time the church clerk used the term "women" instead of "ladies.") At several of our business meetings the pastor would give a short talk on financial management. In accordance with our new policy, a new slate of officers took office in October, although the month began on a sad note. Charles E. Blount, member since 1885, died the last day of September.

The November 21 meeting dealt with important business. A committee of three was appointed "to take charge of the Pender Street Church property with full authority to act and make sale thereof." Apparently the congregation there was not able to meet the terms we set out for them in July 1922. In December the committee reported that they had received an offer sufficient to pay off all encumbrances, and we told them to go ahead and sell. The failure of the Pender Street church was probably a result of the success of tobacco. That church was essentially a "mill village church," centering around Wilson Cotton Mills, long the city's largest employer, which was nearby. Mill workers lived near the place they worked, since they had no transportation other than their feet. Many small southern cities had a First Baptist and a mill village Baptist church. To be sure, there was a certain element of class distinction there, but it was indirect; there was the practical problem of distance. By founding the Pender Street mission, we were taking the church to the people where they lived. Many of our members could now drive a considerable distance to church—one reason for the growing enrollment—but tired workers at the mill village found it a long walk to Pine and Nash. By the late 1920s the cotton market was losing ground to tobacco in the local economy.6 In 1930 the Pender Street building was used by a Pentecostal Holiness congregation. Now, neatly bricked over but with the same building plan, it is home

^{5.} Young, To Win the Prize, 25.

^{6.} Valentine, The Rise of a Southern Town, 65, 89, 97-98.

of Christ Deliverance Tabernacle. That little structure has lasted a lot longer than the bigger one we put up for ourselves downtown.

On November 23, 1928, Southern Baptists suffered a great loss when Edgar Y. Mullins of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville died. He was then, and still remains for some, one of the SBC's outstanding and programmatic theological thinkers. He had a hand in preventing Frank Norris from splitting the denomination and helped keep the convention in the moderate midstream, where it would remain until Dr. Mullins's traditional type of open, moderate leadership was repudiated and successfully overthrown in the 1980s. His death was front-page news in the *Daily Times* that day, but the same issue featured another headline item: "Bull Market in Stocks Starts on Another Rampage." This, mind you, was 1928. In addition to being the last year of the country's boom times, it was the year that Mickey Mouse made his debut on the silver screen.

The year 1929 certainly started propitiously for us. On January 3 the trustees signed papers buying the Ella M. Green property on Park Avenue at Nash Street. We were making progress toward the building we dreamed of. We had one property at Park and Nash (where the sanctuary now stands), and another at the corner of the next intersection, although it was across Daniel Street from the current church property. So optimistic were we that in June we set up a committee to sell the properties at Pine and Nash.

That June we also authorized the purchase of two hundred new hymnals. The one chosen, called *Hymn and Praise Book* in the minutes, was almost certainly *The Baptist Hymn and Praise Book* published by the Sunday School Board of the SBC in Nashville. Though it had long been a steady seller, by 1929 it had become rather old-fashioned, reflecting the traditional hymnody of earlier decades and containing few of the newer gospel songs, an introduction from the northern states, that had become popular on the sawdust trail, in Sunday Schools and youth meetings.

We could not have known it at the time, but by the afternoon of Thursday, October 24, 1929, our dreams for having a new church building anytime soon lay in tatters on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange. Hard times were coming.

Sunday, November 10, was Homecoming Rally Day. Not much is said about it in the records, though there were a few additions. Nothing is said about it in the *Daily Times* either, but the paper gave a lot of space to a homecoming at the Primitive Baptist Church. Perhaps the paper's ties to the Primitive Baptist Gold family had something to do with it. Do you think it's too late to protest?

The church record doesn't specifically mention it, but we seem to have had our usual April revival in 1930, since on Sunday, April 27, fifteen people presented themselves for baptism, and on Wednesday night we baptized twenty.

Unfortunately, the *Daily Times* for that period does not survive, so we don't know who the preacher was. There was no net gain in membership, however, because earlier in the month we purged the rolls of about sixty members. Apparently these were people who had just vanished or otherwise shown no interest. In June 1930 Building Fund had about a thousand dollars in it, but the church's bank account was overdrawn by \$444. Monthly receipts were not healthy, but by September we showed a \$281 balance in our favor.

It wasn't enough. We had some heavy financial obligations that we were not able to meet, and in December we borrowed \$7,400 from Atlantic Christian College, putting up the Green property on Park Street as security for the loan. You've heard of the best thing since sliced bread? Well, 1930 was the year that Wonder Bread introduced presliced loaves for sale. This made sales of timed electric pop-up toasters go skyrocketing and made big changes in the American breakfast.

In 1931 the country was sinking deeper into the depression, but there were some bright spots: "The Star-Spangled Banner" became the national anthem, and in New York City, the George Washington Bridge and the Empire State Building were finished and in use. There weren't many bright spots at FBC. A number of deaths are recorded early in the year, and the first of them is worthy of attention: Herbert Taylor died on January 5.7 This is recorded in the minutes, along with a brief notation: "This church shares with the family the loss." Dr. Bagby conducted the funeral at the home the next day. Herbert was thirty-seven years old and had joined the church during Wilson's Ham-Ramsey revival in 1924. He had a thirty-year-old wife and a four-year-old son, and lived on Vance Street east of the railroad with his eighty-three-year-old grandmother and an unemployed sixteen-year-old brother-in-law. He was a filling station attendant. The reason all this is worth mentioning is that Herbert died of a kidney condition related to alcoholism. Not many years back, if this man had showed signs of a persistent drinking problem we would have thrown him out of the church. Not only did that not happen, but his death was recorded in the minutes, respectfully. The church had had a change of attitude, not about alcohol but about itself. We were not a fortress defending our purity against sin; we were a fellowship of sinners saved by grace, sharing our mutual woes, bearing our mutual burdens, and shedding the sympathizing tear. Pastors Kester, Mercer, and Bagby had done their work well.

In the reports from organizations given at the first meeting of the year there are a couple of interesting notes. We learn that the Men's Club will meet the last Sunday night of each month. Dr. Bagby gave the BYPU report,

^{7.} H. C. Moss began the duties of church clerk in October 1930, and since then deaths have been reported in the minutes. This was seldom the case earlier. Probably not all deaths were being recorded at this point.

saying that an intermediate union had been formed. Billy Crute was its president. We will meet Billy again later.

On March 7 we lost T. F. Pettus, Sue Blount's husband. He had joined in May 1905 and had been one of our pillars. A resolution from the deacons reads in part:

The diaconate is poorer by much because of his going. He was constant in meeting every duty which fell to him. His advice was always timely and true. He put the Kingdom of God first in his life, and counted no task too hard or taxing. He was ever ready to shoulder his full part in the planning for and the execution of the work of the church which he served. He loved his church, and was a leader, true and tried in it. We shall miss him in all of our meetings.

On April 4, Sarah ("Sallie") Edgerton Blount died, the widow of George W. Blount, one of our first members. Mrs. Blount joined the church in June 1885. At age ninety, she was the oldest person in the county. Her funeral was at three thirty the next day, Easter Sunday, at the church, an occasion marked by simplicity and beauty. Dr. Bagby conducted the service. The choir sang "How Firm a Foundation," "Ten Thousand Times Ten Thousand," and "Jerusalem the Golden." The only flowers in the church were flowers on the pall on the coffin, grown in her own old-fashioned garden at her home on West Nash, where she had lived for seventy years, though the cemetery lot was abloom with floral tributes. Mrs. Blount was the last person among us with living memories of the church's first years. We were orphans.

There is no mention of it in the church records, but Dr. Bagby submitted his resignation to the church on Sunday, May 18, 1931, to be effective at the end of the month. No reason is given, but money may have had something to do with it. We owed him money when he left, and we did not or could not get around to paying him until August the next year. Russell Stephenson, years later, remembered that the church depended on the Sunday collections to pay the pastor during these years of the depression. We seemed to have liked each other; the church drew up resolutions to be presented to him, but they are not given in the minutes.

Dr. Bagby left us for FBC of Williamsburg, Kentucky, where he enjoyed

^{8.} News and Observer, April 7, 1931. The WDT is not extant for this period, but the N&O quotes a four-paragraph article from our local paper, apparently published Saturday, the day of Mrs. Blount's death. I wonder if Mrs. Blount may have written the anonymous little history of the church found in the WDT of July 26, 1821. No one would have been in a better position.

^{9.} WDT, May 18, 1931.

some teaching at Cumberland College, a Baptist institution there. His wife Lula came down with cancer and died in Williamsburg in 1933. In 1935 Paul married Muriel Creighton Martin, a faculty member at Cumberland. Somewhere in there he found time to win the Kentucky Amateur Golf Championship four times. Later the couple moved to Buies Creek, North Carolina, where Paul was pastor at FBC from 1946 to 1948 and where Muriel taught Latin at Campbell College. He served on the Relief and Annuity Board of the SBC, and on the General Board of the North Carolina Baptist Convention. At one time he was its chairman. In 1951 the Little River Baptist Association of North Carolina dedicated its publication of its annual minutes to him. Dr. Bagby died of prostate cancer in Buie's Creek on April 12, 1953. Muriel stayed on there until her last illness. She died in Chapel Hill in 1985.

Today the Bagby family—Paul and his wives Lula and Muriel, as well as a son named Paul Jr., who died at age thirty-six in the North Carolina State Hospital for the Insane at Raleigh¹⁰—are buried together in the Bagby family's old burying ground in the Baptist Church cemetery at Bruington, Virginia, a locality in King and Queen County. No Bagby family lives there any longer, but thirty Bagbys are buried there, including Paul's father and mother, who must have been brought back from Kentucky. Olive rests there. Paul had never lived anywhere near there, but he considered it the family burial ground, the Bagby cave of Machpelah.¹¹

On August 26, 1931, on the recommendation of the pulpit search committee, our church voted to call W. Oscar Blount, then in Bartlesville, Oklahoma. On September 7, he and his wife, Louise Foreman, and their daughter Mary Ann, a toddler, arrived for duty. It would be interesting to know how our church came by a candidate from Oklahoma, but there appears to be no way of finding out. Mr. Blount appears to have no family connection with the local Blounts who had been such a force at FBC.

Louise Foreman was born in Nashville, Tennessee, on January 29, 1899, to a good Baptist family. Her father, Anson D. Foreman, Sr., spent his life in Baptist work, although he was never ordained. Born in Ohio, he went

^{10.} The hospital was later renamed Dorothea Dix. Paul Jr. had been married but had divorced. He had epilepsy and been in the hospital for seven months. Death was due to status epilepticus, a seizure that doesn't stop. This is the second time in this research I have run across someone who died in that grim institution. It was stoutly fenced in, not so much to keep the patients in as to keep the general public out. People liked to come by on weekends to laugh at and make fun of all the crazy people and their antics. Like at a zoo.

^{11.} Information on Bruington kindly provided by Ron Thompson and R. T. Ryland, Jr., of the community. The cave of Machpelah is the site where Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rachel, and Iacob and Leah were laid.

to Nashville, where he met and married the daughter of a Baptist preacher, Grace Adams. Mr. Foreman was in the real estate business and moved to Houston, Texas, in January 1911. He served Texas Baptists as president of the state convention from 1940 to 1942 and was on the executive board of the Baptist General Convention of Texas for twenty-seven years. Louise received a BA from Rice Institute in Houston and an MA from Baylor. It may have been at Baylor that she met Oscar. Oscar was born in Alabama in 1890, but the family got around a bit. In 1900 they were living in Georgia, and in 1910 in Texarkana, Texas. Oscar entered Baylor in 1910 and graduated in 1914. He went on to seminary in Louisville from there, and when he registered for the draft in 1917 he was pastor of Midway Baptist Church, not far from Louisville.

Louise, meanwhile, was instrumental in forming the first Baptist Student Union. That was in Texas, and it was on this model that Frank H. Leavell started the South-wide organization known to most college students as the BSU. Miss Foreman worked as Leavell's assistant. In the summer of 1927 she made a trip to Europe on the Caronia, giving as her address a downtown business office in Memphis. And in September 1927 Oscar traveled to Ireland, leaving and departing from Quebec on the Regina, but his address was Okolona, Mississippi, where he was pastor of FBC from 1923 to 1927. They were both single at the time, but they married later in the year. The next year their only child, Martha Ann, was born in Houston. After Martha's birth, Oscar accepted the church in Bartlesville, Oklahoma. He resigned the church on June 17, 1931, effective July 1. The church wrote a commendatory resolution mentioning that he had helped the church eliminate \$12,000 of debt and brought about the gift of an organ. They said he left the church wellorganized and harmonious. That bit about getting the church out of debt may have made Mr. Blount sound attractive to our search committee.¹³

In September we adopted a budget for the coming year of \$7,500, and our new pastor suggested adopting a "spiritual budget" of seventy-five professions of faith and seventy-five unenlisted Baptists. In November we had revival services. Mr. Blount did his own preaching, but we had a husband-and-wife team, Mr. and Mrs. Harkness, come in for the special music. There were sixteen profession of faith and a few additions by letter.

In March 1932 there were a couple of newsworthy items in the papers: the Lindbergh baby was kidnapped, and the first Tarzan movie appeared. The

^{12.} The Foreman family Bible, a German Bible published in 1712, is in the archives of the Texas Baptist Historical Collection in Dallas.

^{13.} Information from various sources, including personal friends Willodene Scott and Sue Conn, and from an article in the *Baptist Standard* (January 7, 1959) by Frank E. Bukhalter, "God's Layman."

first days of March in eastern North Carolina saw ferocious winds and bitterly cold weather. Ponies on the Outer Banks died. Some further damage must have been done to the steeple, parts of which had fallen to the sidewalk back in 1926. The church agreed with the Building Committee that the steeple on the church should come down and repairs should be made to the roof. The steeple was never replaced. Photos from the 1930s and afterward show only a square tower topped by an open-topped belfry. That surely didn't help the problem of the leaky roof. For our church this was the worst year of the depression, and we couldn't afford to remodel. By the time we recovered,



Oscar Blount (FBC Bartlesville, OK)

we were already looking to move to the new location. Sunday, March 6, 1932, would prove to be a historic day for our congregation, because Mr. James I. Miller came forward for membership, moving his letter from FBC of Henderson, North Carolina, where he had been a church leader and Sunday School superintendent. He would provide FBC of Wilson with over three decades of leadership.

Pastor Blount planned special observances for Holy Week in March. On Wednesday night we observed the Lord's Supper "by a spread table under candle light." There were several additions to the church on Easter Sunday, and several baptisms at the evening service. In April the church expressed formal appreciation to the Woman's Missionary Union for their work in financing church repairs. This seems to be the first time in our books that the group is called the WMU rather than the Woman's Missionary Society. The Ladies' Aid Society seems to be defunct now. But the ladies are still engaging in fund-raising activities, and the church openly expresses its gratitude, completely unlike the suspicions and misgivings expressed by the men back in 1898. In May the WMU had the church building redecorated, and we thanked them for that. We joined with other churches in town to put on a Vacation Bible School and offered the use of our building for a citywide Boy Scout Sunday.

In July 1932 the Dow bottomed out at 41.22, the lowest point of the depression. Even though our women seemed to be carrying most of the financial burden, we did find ourselves able to settle two old debts, one to former pastor Paul Bagby and one to Thomas Yelverton Company. This is now a funeral



The "log cabin" at Daniel and Nash, used by the Scouts (J. Robert Boykin, III)

home, but the expense was probably for furniture. In those days furniture dealers often did work as undertakers as a sideline.

The world began to change in 1933. In the United States, the new president, Franklin Roosevelt, began to deal with the depression by mandating bank holidays and creating the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) and the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). 4 Germany dealt with it by sweeping Hitler to power. But FBC started February with a nice development. George Stronach offered us what was left of the old Scout cabin on his place near Young Springs. 15 The church authorized the Scout Committee, if they could get free labor, to move the lumber onto our property at Nash and Daniel and erect a permanent Scout Cabin. We did this, and what became known as the "log cabin," made of telephone poles and roofed with license plates, became a fixture that many of our members recall nostalgically. In April B. W. Spilman, whom we met in chapter 13 lecturing on how to be happy and fat, held a two-week revival. A number of additions were made, including a young E. B. Barefoot, Jr., who is still with us. He remembers being baptized by Oscar Blount. We are finally into a time where there are living memories. Louise Blount taught the women's Sunday School class.

^{14.} The CCC organized unemployed men to work at projects to protect and enrich the environment. Our own late A. J. Hayes was one of the CCC boys.

^{15.} Young Springs (originally Young's Springs) was the neighborhood on the Wells School side of Nash Street, extending from Raleigh Road up to Dick's Hot Dog Stand at Clyde.

In July 1933 we decided to sell the lot on Daniel Street known as Patterson House, if we could get thirty-five hundred dollars for it. More serious problems had been developing. The church felt that Mr. Blount displayed a disturbing interest in the boys of the congregation, and we asked him to leave. He resigned Sunday, July 9, effective immediately. He told the *Biblical Recorder* he planned on doing graduate work at Southern Baptist Seminary in Louisville, but he actually went to Chicago, where he may have done some interim work. He took a church in Marengo, Illinois, and moved from there to Benson Baptist Church in Omaha in 1937. While in Omaha he had a heart attack, and the family went to live with Oscar's brother, who ran a sawmill in Arkansas. In 1941 he somehow became dean of the Bible Institute of Philadelphia. Later he became business manager of the Philadelphia School of the Bible and pastor of Mount Olivet Church in Germantown. There he died on January 9, 1949, at age fifty-eight. He is the only one of our pastors of whom it can be said that he had an obituary in the *New York Times*. ¹⁶

When Oscar died, Louise bloomed. She stayed in Philadelphia and finished a DEd degree at Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary in 1953. Then she returned to Texas, where she taught religion and was dean of women at Mary Hardin/Baylor College. The next year she went to Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville to become director of women's activities. She retired in 1965 and moved to Nashville, where her daughter Martha was liv-

ing at the time, teaching in elementary school, although Martha soon went to Brazil, where she spent most of her career in mission work. Louise taught part-time and did counseling work at the American Baptist Theological Seminary in Nashville, a school for African Americans. She lived on campus part of the time. She continued to be as active in Immanuel Baptist Church in Nashville as her health allowed.

Louise Blount died while visiting her sister in Lubbock, Texas, on October 21, 1980. She was taken back to Nashville for burial. Martha Ann made a quick trip up from Brazil. The funeral was at the church, and the honorary



Louise Foreman Blount (Archives of University of Mary Hardin–Baylor)

^{16.} January 11, 1949.

^{17.} Some of our members remember Mrs. Blount as a rather stern woman, but that was sort of expected if you were a dean of women in the 1950s.

pallbearers read like a Southern Baptist Who's Who: Duke McCall, Bill Fallis, Albert McClellan, A. V. Washburn, and so on. ¹⁸ She was well-known and highly respected. Her longtime friend Sue Conn writes of her, "Mrs. Blount was a lovely lady—a smart woman, but never pushy. She really meant a lot to me, and I still miss knowing that she is praying for me." ¹⁹ Martha Ann, who never married, retired to Nashville when she left her work in Brazil, and died there September 26, 1996.

^{18.} Obituary in the Nashville Tennesseean, October 30, 1980.

^{19.} Letter to the author, April 30, 2008.

Chapter 21

Forward into Battle

1933-1943 (Hugh A. Ellis)

I have heard the trumpet call, the battle cry. Ruin on ruin is in the news

-JEREMIAH 4:19-20 NJB

In 1940 WINSTON CHURCHILL, with Britain almost on its knees, spoke confidently of a time when "the new world, with all its power and might," would step forth to the rescue of the old. In 1933, when FBC of Wilson was at a low point, we looked to a Brit to come to our own rescue. On July 30, Hugh A. Ellis, pastor of FBC in Henderson, came down to fill our pulpit, and we were delighted! A search committee had been appointed consisting of five men and two women. The ladies were Mrs. William Crute (Billy's mother) and Sue Pettus. One of the men was James I. Miller, who already filled a place of responsibility. The committee lost no time in recommending Dr. Ellis, who had once been Mr. Miller's pastor in Henderson. We all agreed, and he accepted our offer of twenty-seven hundred dollars per year. Plus the parsonage, of course.

We may have been charmed by his accent. Ellis was born in Old Colwyn, a small seaside community in north Wales, on June 14, 1874. In 1881 his fam-

1. Mr. Miller was nominated to be a deacon in August 1932, less than six months after he joined. He requested that he not be considered. That was wise. Now he felt ready for leadership. Our by-laws now require a certain time of membership before eligibility for the diaconate.



Hugh A. Ellis (FBC archives)

ily was living in Birkenhead, Cheshire, in England, where his father was an unemployed schoolmaster. Hugh got a good education. He attended seminary at Dunoon, a small town on the Firth of Clyde near Glasgow. Dunoon College was a seminary for ministers in the Nonconformist churches of the United Kingdom,2 meaning anything other than Church of England (Episcopal). He also received a degree from the University of Glasgow. The Baptist church at Fareham, in the south of England near Portsmouth, ordained him to the ministry in 1899. Sometime in the third quarter of 1904 he married Edith Mary Pratt of Liverpool (which is not far from

Old Colwyn), and they had two daughters, Geraldine and Constance. In 1908 or 1909 the family emigrated to Canada, where Ellis was pastor of FBC, Quebec City, from 1909 to 1912. From there he went to the Waverly Road Baptist Church of Toronto, where he stayed from 1912 to 1918.

The Ellises came to the States in May 1918, where he took up the pastorate of Ashland Baptist Church in Ashland, Virginia. The church at Ashland remembers that the young people's work was greatly strengthened during Ellis's tenure. They describe him as "an eloquent preacher and a warm personality." The church invited him back in 1948 to speak at its ninetieth anniversary. In 1923 he left Ashland to become pastor at FBC of Henderson, North Carolina. During his tenure the church completed its auditorium, and the Ellises received their U.S. citizenship. In 1931 Wake Forest University granted him the DD degree. The family suffered a personal tragedy in 1928, when their daughter Constance, a student at UNC in Chapel Hill, came down with the flu. She returned home to Henderson, but died in the local hospital on November 25.

Sunday, September 10, 1933, Dr. Ellis began his ministry here. He and his

^{2.} Today Dunoon is mostly remembered as the alma mater of Oswald Chambers, author of the still-popular devotional book *My Utmost for His Highest*, said to be favorite reading of George W. Bush. Chambers was there long before Ellis, however.

^{3.} History of the Ashland Baptist Church, 1858–1958. This is a small pamphlet published by the church, with no author given. I have only a copy of a partial page, unnumbered.

wife, as well as their daughter Geraldine, presented their letters from Henderson. Geraldine was married to Kermit S. Combs, who came with his letter from FBC Statesville on November 5. The business meeting on December 13 shows for the first time a report on three "junior organizations" of the WMU: the Young Women's Association has fifteen enrolled, the Sunbeams have twenty-five, and the Girls' Auxiliary has twenty-five. The church reported a donation of \$151.41 to the "Lottie Moon Xmas Offering," the first mention of the Lottie Moon Offering in our records. We contributed \$787.40 to the Cooperative Program of the SBC. There was a special report on "personal service": 72 religious services; 36 conversions; 743 pieces of "good literature" distributed; 986 garments for the poor; 45 hours of nursing; 1,328 gifts of flowers, baskets, and so on; 262 gifts of quarts of milk; 1,829 visits to sick, strangers, and so on; \$12.20 to the needy; and 2 boxes of clothing to the Red Cross. Kermit Combs, the pastor's son-in-law, wanted to enter the ministry. On December 20 we wrote him a letter of recommendation to Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. In September we granted Mr. and Mrs. Combs their church letters, but the records do not mention a specific church. In all likelihood it was some small church in Kentucky where he was a student pastor.

The Roanoke Association met at our church in October 1934. Mrs. Crute was in charge of the arrangements. We reported to the association a membership of 726, with the church itself valued at \$20,000 and all additional property worth another \$20,000, but with a debt of \$10,000. We carried \$28,000 worth of insurance. We gave \$1,500 to the Cooperative Program. In November Dr. Ellis preached the convention sermon at the North Carolina Baptist State Convention in New Bern.

The most significant activity in 1935 took place in February. In preparation for a two-week revival, there were two weeks of cottage prayer meetings. The revival itself began Monday, February 18, and went for two weeks. Zeno Wall, who had preached a revival for us back in 1923 and was now a pastor in Shelby, returned to be the preacher. There were at least seventeen additions.⁴

The big event, however, happened on Sunday, February 17. We ordained to the ministry Ollin J. Owens, who had joined the church at age fourteen during the Ham-Ramsey revival in 1924.⁵ When we first pick up Ollie's story, he is nine years old, living with his parents John and Nita on a farm in Pitt

^{4.} Jessie Daniel was among those coming forward on February 18, but for some reason her name does not appear on the church roll.

^{5.} On an "Operation Baptist Biography Data Form for Living Person" filled out by either himself or his wife, the date is given as September 1923, but this is an error. He was baptized July 23, 1924.



Ollin J. Owens (Glen and Greer Owens Clayton)

County. At some point they moved to Wilson, where John was on the police force by 1925. Nita's brother John was also a policeman. In 1928 Nita, Ollie's mother, died of tuberculosis—a leading killer of young adults at the time. John then moved in with two of his sisters, along with three of his children (Ollin, the oldest, was nineteen). Rosa, thirty-seven, a bookkeeper for the gas company, was head of the household. Martha, forty-nine, apparently kept house for them all.

Rosa and brother John could not support the family. The three children (the oldest, Helen, was apparently married or perhaps deceased by the time the family came to Wilson) were sent to Union Mills in Rutherford County to

the Alexander School, also known as the School for Motherless Children, set up under Baptist auspices. On September 30, 1930, we gave Ollie his church letter. He probably joined the Round Hill Baptist Church, which served the orphanage community. Back in Wilson on December 28, 1931, Ollie's father, still on the police force, committed suicide with a gunshot to the head. Ollie never talked much about his childhood; the family believes it was probably too painful to bring up.⁶

There were over a hundred children at the school, but one of the teachers, a Kentuckian named Mary Grigsby, took Ollie under her wings. She saw to it that he could attend Mars Hill, Wake Forest, and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. In addition to Miss Grigsby's help, Ollie worked to put himself through. The family back in Wilson could offer no assistance. But on Sunday, February 17, 1935, Ollin J. Owens moved his membership from Wake Forest back to Wilson for the purpose of being ordained. The ordination was probably the evening service. Participating were J. T. Kincheloe, pastor of FBC Rocky Mount; A. W. Fleschman of Memorial Baptist, Greenville; our own pastor, Hugh Ellis, who gave the sermon; L. R. Ennis of Farmville; John

^{6.} I am grateful to Greer and Glen Clayton for much of the information about Ollin Owens, Mrs. Clayton's father.

^{7.} Mary Grigsby never married. She taught at that school all her career, even after it became part of the public school system. She died at age seventy-two in 1972 and is buried at Round Hill Baptist Cemetery in Union Mills.

Arch McIver of Immanuel Baptist in Greenville; and Dr. J. L. Peacock of Tarboro. The Rev. Ollin J. Owens gave the benediction. He served the Baptist church in Marshall, North Carolina, before going to South Carolina, where he spent the rest of his ministry: Ridge Spring, 1940–1946; FBC Winnsboro, 1946–1952; Eastland Baptist in Greenville, 1952–1966; and director of the Baptist Annuity Board in South Carolina until his retirement in 1977. He died on Christmas Day 1983. His wife, Loulie Latimore Owens, whom he wed in 1939, was a prominent South Carolina Baptist leader in her own right: author, historian, archivist, and Furman trustee. She passed away on January 15, 1998.⁸

Sometime before 1935, when prohibition was lifted in the state, Pastor Ellis made an afternoon call on one of his deacons, but the deacon wasn't home. His son welcomed the pastor in and, trying to be hospitable, did what he had seen his dad do for visitors before. He went to a closet, pulled out a jug, and said, "You want a little snort?"

In April 1935 we took a step in a controversial direction that would have made some Baptists think of us as outright liturgical liberals: we voted to have the choir wear robes. That was a big step, really. In November we voted to allow the trustees to borrow up to \$600 to put the Park Avenue property "in condition." (Actually, the clerk recorded only that this was moved and seconded. We assume it was voted on and approved.) In June 1936 a revival led by a Dr. McLean produced a number of new members, including James O. Mattox, of whom we will hear more later.

This book has mentioned a couple of times some decisions the church made about the election of deacons. Actually, this seems to have been a matter of continuing difference of opinion, and from time various changes were made in the method that I just haven't bothered to record. It's complicated and dull, and we went back and forth. But in October 1936 we passed a rather thorough statement (one suspects Pastor Ellis was behind it):

The nominations are to be made by a committee. The Chairman of the Board of Deacons is to appoint two retiring deacons and one deacon who is not retiring. The Pastor is to appoint one man who is not a member of the Board of Deacons and two ladies. This committee of six will nominate two for each vacancy on the Board. The report of this committee is to be made to the Church in conference on the third Wednesday night in October. At this time further nominations from the floor will be

^{8.} For information on the Owens family I am indebted to Greer and Glen Clayton and to the Furman University Special Collections and Archives.

accepted. Then on the last Sunday in November the election is to be held at the morning service.

There is a certain exasperated sound about the wording. The controversy will grind on, however, about whether deacons rotating off can succeed themselves.

At the same time we voted to publish each quarter a Church Honor Roll of all those members who had paid their pledges to the church finances. Think we should try that now?

Mr. Miller led us to take a giant step forward in May 1937. With the aid of some fifty or sixty members, he bought two lots on Daniel Street known as the John Wiggins Estate and presented the trustees with the deeds to the property, free of debt. The church now owned property from Park straight over to Daniel. Elsewhere during May, the German airship *Hindenburg* caught fire while landing in New Jersey.

In June 1937 we had a successful revival, led by Dr. Henry Stevens, running Monday, June 1, through Friday, June 11. Some familiar names are beginning to show up in the lists of new members at these meetings. Here we have Mack Bissette, Royce Crawley, Connor Vick, and Bernard Mattox (brother of James O. mentioned above, and later Hollywood film and TV actor). At these services Kermit and Geraldine Combs presented their letters from a church in Louisville. Geraldine, you will remember, is the pastor's daughter.

The church at Ashland, Virginia, where Dr. Ellis had once served as pastor, had called Brother Combs as its pastor. A service was held Thursday evening, July 29, to ordain not only Kermit Combs but also S. L. Morgan, Jr., currently assistant pastor at FBC in Rocky Mount. The presbytery consisted of Dr. J. W. Kincheloe, pastor at FBC Rocky Mount; our own Dr. Ellis; D. M. Clemmons of Selma; R. H. Herring of Zebulon; E. G. Willis of Stantonsburg; and S. L. Morgan of Creedmoor. Morgan was not only the father of one of the candidates but was also James I. Miller's former pastor at Henderson.

Kermit Combs, a native of Virginia who grew up in the mountains of North Carolina, graduated from Berea College, Kentucky, and from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville. He was at the church in Ashland from 1937 to 1942, when he entered the U.S. Army as a chaplain; during

^{9.} His screen name is Gregory Walcott.

^{10.} This is the second connection FBC Wilson has with what is now FBC Ashland. Actually, there is a third. Robert Thompson has been pastor there since 1992. Robert was a student at Atlantic Christian College and a leader in the Baptist Student Union work centered here at FBC. He is a close friend of Tom Graves, founding president of Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond, who has spoken at our church a number of times.



Kermit and Geraldine Ellis Combs with son Peter (Toby Moss)

the war he served in Europe. He was with the army fifteen years, throughout the Korean conflict, and later pastored a number of churches in Florida. He died January 12, 1973, and is buried in Arlington National Cemetery.

The pastor took his vacation in August 1938, but some business was transacted during that time. We leased to North Carolina Theaters, Inc., some property on Goldsboro Street that was passed on as part of the T. F. Pettus estate. Mr. Pettus had provided that on his wife's death we should inherit ten thousand dollars. On the strength of this, and presumably with Sue Pettus's approval, we could lease this property. In the pastor's absence Brother Simms from Wendell preached, as well as two luminaries from Wake Forest College: law professor and future gubernatorial candidate I. Beverly Lake and Dean Daniel Bryan.

In December we increased the number of deacons elected each year from four to five. Dr. Ellis appointed a nominating committee consisting of one deacon, one layman, one "lady of the church," the superintendent of Sunday School, and himself. We weren't ready for female deacons (though some churches were), but Dr. Ellis seems to have insisted that women be represented on important committees.

The year 1939 seems to have been quiet at FBC, although not in the world at large. On September 1 Germany invaded Poland, and World War II began. Dr. Ellis must have spent many anxious hours reading the *Wilson Daily*

Times during the next years, when his native land was under bombardment. A significant move was made by the church in December, however. We voted to contribute the equivalent of 4 percent of the pastor's salary to the Southern Baptist Relief and Annuity Board, so as to provide a pension for the pastor in old age. We were a long time getting around to this. The Board began operations in 1918, but only in the 1920s did it become a muscular force, partly due to a gift of \$300,000 from John D. Rockefeller, who had already given \$5 million to the Northern Baptist Convention's counterpart. He had an interest in the welfare of ministers caught in old age with no income.

We opened 1940 with a February revival. The preacher was Sydnor Stealey, pastor of FBC in Raleigh and later first president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest.¹³ There were about ten additions to the church. A premonition of progress came in November, when James I. Miller became chair of the Finance Committee.

Our revival speaker in April 1941 was none other than Theodore F. Adams, pastor of FBC in Richmond. Dr. Adams was one of the most forceful Baptist leaders of the day. He served FBC in Richmond for thirty-two years, as well as holding a position on the executive committee of the Baptist World Alliance. He was known for his emphasis on social concerns, pastoral care, and missions. He was author of four books and would be on the cover of *Time* for the week of December 5, 1955. This is the kind of man Hugh Ellis wanted to fill our pulpit, and that in and of itself says a lot about Dr. Ellis. During the revival we had fourteen additions by profession of faith and several transfers of letter.

Mr. Miller reported in May that the church was free of debt. In November he was one of the newly elected deacons.

There were not many restaurants in Wilson in 1941. The Golden Weed was here, and Monticello. Apart from the restaurant at the Cherry Hotel and the cafeteria at the Briggs Hotel, however, not many were open on Sunday. People ate at home after church. In fact, we ate just about every meal at

- 11. The *Daily Times* began calling itself *Wilson Daily Times* in 1936. In 2009 it reverted to an even earlier name, *Wilson Times*.
- 12. Barnes, *Southern Baptist Convention*, 219–220; Retta O'Bannon, "Relief and Annuity Board," in *SBE*, 1140–1145.
- 13. Southeastern Seminary began on the Wake Forest College campus in 1952. In 1956 they inherited the campus when WFC, now WFU, moved to Winston-Salem. Stealey was a disarming, salty character whom I remember well from days at Southeastern. My favorite story: I was in the cafeteria line just behind him at the beginning of the school year, and a new server stood behind the display of desserts and was rather overwhelmed to find herself serving the president of the seminary. She spoke a few words, and Stealey, assessing her accent and bent on mischief, glared at her and growled, "I'll bet you're a damned Yankee."

home, but Sunday afternoon was the big dinner of the week. Fried chicken with mashed potatoes and milk gravy, maybe. With sweet iced tea, of course. Fryers could be had at the groceries for twenty-nine cents a pound; beef roast at twenty-three cents; potatoes four pounds for fifteen cents. Sunday, December 7, was unseasonably warm in Wilson. As many of our families were enjoying that Sunday midday meal, Japanese aircraft were beginning their two-hour attack on the U.S. Pacific Fleet at anchor out in the Hawaiian Islands. At 2:22 P.M. our time, Roosevelt's press secretary announced the news to the press, and at 2:26 the first radio flashes began to electrify the nation. The news would have been received over the wires at our local station. WGTM, just as the Pentecostal Holiness Church Hour broadcast was ending and the Sunday Symphony was about to begin. Soon the telephone lines would be humming as news spread from household to household. The Daily Times, always closed cold on Sundays, managed to pull its crew together and get a special edition onto the streets by nine o'clock that night. Maybe our people would have been able to buy copies as they left church. Unfortunately, there seems to be no record of the specific reaction at FBC. There was an evening service, and surely the day's attack and the impending war would have been the subject of a hastily composed sermon and of prayers, but I have not been able to find anyone with memories of what exactly happened at church that night. The United States declared war on Japan the next day, and within the week on Germany and Italy as well. The church bulletin from Sunday the 14th gives no hint that anything happened. The *Daily Times* was full of war news but appears to have given no space to events in the city on Sunday. Dire days loomed ahead.

During that ominous autumn the *Biblical Recorder* had been running a series of articles by various Southern Baptist thinkers on the issue of peace. S. L. Morgan, once James I. Miller's pastor in Henderson and a vocal advocate of peace and justice, wrote one of the articles. It decried the policies of Roosevelt and Churchill that could only lead to war and naively advocated making overtures to Hitler that he would certainly accept. Morgan never mentioned Japan. Before subscribers received their issues, the war had begun. Morgan asked that his article be withdrawn, but it was already in the mails. In the next issue of December 17, the editor wrote on the front page:

Actual involvement of our country in war imposes new and severe tests both upon churches and individual Christians. What seem to us most ruthless outbursts of barbarity must blind us to the fact that we follow the Lord Christ. If the war with Japan were wholly black and white, rather than the woolly

gray it is, even then there would be no Christian grounds for invective and hate. Such must not be proclaimed either from the pulpit or in private. . . . In times of peace or war the spirit of Christ can hardly be discovered in the freely used epithets often employed, and especially, the inflection given to them, in speaking of people of other races and classes. Consider, for example, *Hun*, *Dago*, *Nigger*, *Jap*, *Chink*, and the like. Sometimes *Jew* and *Catholic* may be pronounced with authoritarian scorn. It is all too easy in America to substitute standardized abuse and invective for rational discussion. . . . Whatever comes out of the darkness into which we are now plunging, let Christians follow Christ who had nothing harsher to say of his crucifiers than, "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do." 15

J. W. House, member since 1920 and stalwart church leader, died in April 1942. A long laudatory resolution was written and passed. On September 6 we certified eighteen-year-old James Mattox to the gospel ministry. He was about to set off to Wake Forest College. At a called meeting in October we agreed—once again—to a resolution that deacons cannot succeed themselves, rescinding the last resolution dealing with this constant problem. We just couldn't make up our minds.

If we had a revival in 1942, there is no record of it. We may have been breaking away from the custom of having one every year, certainly of having two a year, and we seem to have been limiting them to a single week. In April 1943 we had a week of services featuring Dr. Wade H. Bryant, pastor of FBC of Richmond, and an influential Virginia Baptist leader. The records do not list any additions. The clerk may simply have failed to record them, but a rather long list of new members by profession and by letter are listed for May. Perhaps those who responded during the revival are listed here.

Wednesday, May 5, 1943, was a sad day. Dr. Ellis, who would be sixty-nine in June, tendered his resignation as of June 27. Dr. Ellis had been active not only in our own church but also in the Minister's Council of Wilson (president and secretary). He had been chairman of the Wilson Welfare Board and the Wilson Red Cross Roll Call. He had been a member of the general board of the state convention, a member of its Executive Committee, and a member of its committee on benevolence. The Ellises retired to Miami, but he may have occasionally done some interim work. We know that he was back in North Carolina to serve Pullen Memorial in Raleigh as their interim

^{15.} Speaking as someone who was four years old at the time, it seems in retrospect that the issue was closer to black and white than "woolly gray." But the sentence "It is all too easy . . ." expresses timeless truth.

minister during most of 1948. His residence was on Northwest Third Street in Miami, but for the last two weeks of his life he was living with his daughter Geraldine at her home elsewhere in the city. He died September 28, 1954.

Our records for the years of Dr. Ellis's pastorate are sparse. The depression was on, and toward the end of his time here the country was at war and people had other things on their mind. There is disappointingly little in our historical materials about the war years, but we can be sure that on the home front FBC members were doing what citizens everywhere were doing: buying savings stamps and bonds, storing cooking fats, stomping on tin cans, and storing scrap metals to be salvaged. We listened anxiously to war news on the radio and held our breaths when we learned of casualties among those from our area. We would read the *Daily Times* carefully for familiar names. On a plaque off the narthex of the sanctuary today are the names of FBC members who were in service, with a gold star beside two of those names. There are 110 names there, including five women. The list is not perfectly accurate. There are some names of people who once were members of our church community and had family here but who had left Wilson before the war. There are also names omitted—names of young men who did indeed serve overseas during the war, such as Alec Flowers and Wiley Barnes, but who were not technically members of the church at the time. These were trouble-ridden years, and it seems inappropriate to pass lightly over them just to get to the next item on the church record. This may be a good time to tell the story of the two boys—that's what we called them then—from FBC who never returned from service, and of one of the girls who joined up.

Billy Crute became a member of FBC before his parents did. The family had come down from Virginia. William E. Crute, Sr., was a tobacconist. Billy would have been about ten years old when he came forward during the revival conducted by J. T. Riddick in April 1927. His parents moved their letters here in August. William Sr. and his wife, Ella, became active members. Billy was about five foot ten, with blue eyes and brown hair. He got some of his education at the Oak Ridge Military Academy in North Carolina; records show he was there in 1937. He signed up with the army in February 1941 and sometime in the next year or so married Marie Ann Smith of Pitt County. There is a newspaper clipping, apparently from October 1942, saying that Lt. and Mrs. Crute were visiting with relatives in Wilson and Greenville before leaving for Georgia, where he would be in training for the next three months. While in Officers Training School at Camp Lee, Virginia, he finished sixth highest in his class. The In February 1943, before going overseas, he

^{16.} Some of the data on Crute's life were kindly provided by Dorothy Groh of Raleigh, who has done genealogical research.

^{17.} Wilson DAR scrapbook in the North Carolina Archives.

made out a simple will leaving everything to his wife. Lieutenant Crute was assigned to the 315th Army ORD Supply Company. He was in New Caledonia in the South Pacific in the fall of 1944, during the American drive toward the Japanese home islands. On September 26, an observation post above the port of Nouméa in New Caledonia observed an explosion out to sea. 18 It was the Elihu Thomson, one of the "liberty ships" operated by the Merchant Marine. It was sailing between New Caledonia and the New Hebrides (now Vanuatu) when the captain, for whatever reason, in broad daylight, steered the ship into a marked minefield. The vessel struck two mines on the port side forward.¹⁹ At the time of the explosion Billy was on deck. He immediately ran below to see if his men were safe, and while he was there the sea rushed in, engulfing him. He was among thirty-two who lost their lives. The captain ordered the ship abandoned, and a navy work vessel, the USS Apache, at some risk to itself, picked up the survivors and presumably at least some of the dead. On Monday morning, October 2, the family in Wilson received word from the War Department that William Jr. was missing in action. The Collins family lived next door. Deedee (now David Collins, MD) came home on Friday, October 13, and found the family in tears. Earlier that day, word had been received that Billy would never be coming home.²⁰

The master of the ship had his license suspended and was sent back to the States for an investigation. The *Elihu Thomson* was recovered, repaired, and back in service by January. First Lt. William E. Crute, Jr., was first buried at Nouméa, then removed to the American military cemetery in Hawaii. In 1948 Mr. and Mrs. Crute had their son's remains repatriated to Wilson. A funeral was held at the home on Gray Street Thursday, March 4. It was conducted by Dr. Ellis, who came over from Pullen in Raleigh, and Clyde Baucom, pastor at FBC at the time. A quintet of three women and two men, led by Miss Bruce O'Quinn, our minister of music, sang "Ten Thousand Times Ten Thousand" and "Sunrise Tomorrow." Billy's will was probated in Wilson County on December 29, 1944, with H. C. Moss, C. A. Webster, and D. L. Collins as witnesses. The parents died in the 1970s, and today mother and father flank their son in Maplewood Cemetery.

The Pate family had been members of the church for some time, but it is not clear just when Frank R. joined. His name is one among a long list that have been inserted into the church record just after May 30, 1930, "to correct the roll." Frank was employed at the James I. Miller Tobacco Company when

^{18.} Daly, Nouvelle-Calédonie, 288.

^{19.} Elphick, Liberty, 370.

^{20.} Personal conversation with Dr. David Collins of Concord, North Carolina, January 24, 2009. Notices in *WDT*, October 2, 3, 4, 13, 1944. Funeral account in *WDT*, March 5, 1948.

he entered the U.S. Army Air Forces in October 1941 as a ground crewman. He was accepted for flight training, and he received his wings at Lubbock Field, Texas. He was commissioned a first lieutenant in May 1943. In January 1944, he was assigned to Salinas Army Air Base in California. On the afternoon of August 11 that year he took to the air in a P-70 light fighter-bomber on a pilot proficiency local high-altitude mission. Another pilot had flown this aircraft for over two hours in the morning and reported no problem. But Frank, that afternoon, ran into trouble. The right propeller stopped, and the plane went into a dive. It briefly pulled out, began to lose pieces of fabric from the fuselage, wobbled in the air for about a mile, and then crashed into the side of a hill with a tremendous explosion, starting a woods and grass fire that was still burning a week later. There was a hunter out in the hills who saw the whole thing and left a long deposition. Two other civilian witnesses left their accounts, one of whom gave a shovel, flashlights, and canteen of water to a military search unit soon afterward. Reaching the wreck was difficult because of the terrain and the intense forest fire. There is extensive documentation of the incident.²¹ Lieutenant Pate was twenty-six at the time of his death. A funeral was held at FBC on Sunday, August 20, with Pastor Baucom conducting the service. His mother, who had joined the church in 1889, was living with a daughter in Richmond at the time. Frank was laid in Maplewood beside his father, who died in 1938. The grave of a fifteen-year-old

younger brother who died in 1926 is on the father's other side. Frank's mother, Carrie, died in Richmond and was interred with her family in July 1973.

We should tell the story of at least one of the women from FBC who served during World War II. Kathleen Creech, daughter of a local farmer, offered herself for membership during the J. A. Ellis revival of April 1926. Dr. Mercer baptized her. She became a dietitian, with training in Battle Creek, Michigan, and Richmond Medical College. It was apparently before the war broke out that she received a letter from President Roosevelt, sent out to dietitians countrywide, asking for volunteers. They were needed in the mili-



Col. Kathleen Creech (Meg Pace)

^{21.} Compiled from various War Department sources collected by Accident-Report.com. of Millville, NJ.

tary services and would have to be drafted if enough were not forthcoming. Kathleen volunteered and went into the Army Air Corps.²² She was deployed to England and northwest Africa. After the war she continued a career in what became the U.S. Air Force. She worked with NASA in the early days of preparation for space exploration, devising meals and nutritional regimens for space travelers. She retired as a full colonel—the first female full colonel in the U.S. Air Force. She married, and her name was Schultz when she died at Mountain Home, Arkansas, on March 2, 1999.²³

As FBC prepared itself for what was to come, we were of course fearful for our young men, who we knew would soon be leaving for war. But we were also concerned about our children. A fearsome but poorly understood threat was beginning to show up with frightening frequency: polio.

^{22.} I cannot be certain, but I think this would have been before June 1941, when the Army Air Corps became known as the Army Air Force.

^{23.} World War II Papers, Box 98, Wilson scrapbooks, North Carolina Department of Archives and History; personal conversation with Kathleen's sister Mag Pace of New Bern, March 28, 2009.

Chapter 22

Emergence

1943-1952 (Clyde E. Baucom)

The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.

—ISAIAH 9:2 KJV

The search committee (three men and two women) lost no time. It was appointed in May, soon after Dr. Ellis's resignation, and it reported in August. The clerk tells us that we had some fine preaching in the interim; among others he names Olin T. Binkley of Wake Forest College, S. L. Morgan of Wake Forest Baptist Church, Wilber Hutchings of Winston-Salem, C. R. Pittard from Miami, and one Clyde Baucom, who preached on August 8. These may have been "trial sermons," chances to let the people hear a prospective pastor do his best.

Later in the month a young Wilson boy was involved in a medical experiment. He had been suffering in the hospital for three weeks with an infection, and by special orders of the doctor in charge of research on a certain new drug, a special shipment of penicillin was rushed from the labs in Brooklyn to Wilson, to be given intravenously.¹

Clyde Espy Baucom, pastor of McGill Street Baptist Church (now McGill Baptist Church) in Concord, was the nominee. He accepted our offer of

1. WDT, August 26, 1943. The boy was Jimmy Jones of Bailey. I don't know whether the treatment worked.

thirty-six hundred dollars a year and agreed to be here by the second Sunday in November. It would be clear to him when he arrived that he had his work cut out for him, for we passed a long resolution in October stating in no uncertain terms that this church needed to put up a new building at our property on Nash between Park and Daniel and get away from this leaky, squeaky building in the middle of a noisy, increasingly congested business district. We insisted at the same time that we weren't even going to think about beginning it until we knew we were going to be able to see it through financially. We were probably thinking about the false start made on the building at Pine and Nash in 1905, which was stymied for lack of funds.

Mr. Baucom was going to have to be a fund-raiser and a church builder. He would be both.

He began his duties with us Sunday, November 14, 1943. At the evening service pastors of other downtown churches joined in a hearty welcome, and many of their congregants were present. The rector of St. Timothy's, J. Q. Beckwith, Jr., gave the opening prayer, and Pastor Swearingen of First Christian offered words of welcome. "Mr. Baucom spoke feelingly of the deep appreciation that he and his wife had for the warm welcome Wilson had given them. With great reverence he expressed the hope that they could be of service among these people who had received them so kindly." Our new pastor then delivered an "eloquent" sermon using a wartime metaphor, to the effect that all Christians had been drafted into service by God. Mr. Lynch of First Presbyterian gave the closing prayer.²

Having been without pastoral leadership briefly, we had made no plans for a spring revival, but we asked Mr. Baucom to conduct one on his own. He

did, and there were ten additions.

In June 1944 we made the first steps toward the new church. At the pastor's suggestion we elected a committee of thirty-six to oversee "the financing, planning, and erecting" of a new building. That meeting is not specifically dated, but monthly business meetings were held on second Wednesdays. If that was the case here, this meeting would have been held a week and one day after D-Day in Europe. News would have reached Wilson in the wee hours of the morning. The *Daily Times* soon had a special edition out, and their paperboys went banging on their



Clyde Baucom (FBC)

customers' doors before daylight to let them see the news: the long-awaited invasion had begun.³

We had a treat on August 4, when Dr. Ellis returned to be with us on a Thursday night. Then pastor of a big church in Miami, a city with large numbers of servicemen, he gave a talk on his experiences there. At the close of the service, M. J. Batchelor showed some home movies he had taken of the congregation leaving the church on Sunday mornings in 1942, 1943, and 1944. People were amused to watch themselves shaking hands with Dr. Ellis or Mr. Baucom at the door. Where are those films today?

In September, apparently for the first time and so apparently Mr. Baucom's idea, we elected a nominating committee to put up names for all church offices. This committee would serve for only one year. Also in September, Atlantic Christian College delayed its opening for a month because of the polio epidemic in the state. Earlier in the summer, the city closed its swimming pools. Since June 1 there had been 531 new cases in North Carolina, with 23 deaths.⁵

In October another move was made toward streamlining church business. The pastor suggested that when people present themselves for membership at the end of a service, they be voted into membership then and there, without waiting for a formal business meeting, whether coming by profession of faith or by transfer of letter. The next month we smoothed over another little procedural bump. We voted to let the pastor devise a form letter to be sent to members uniting with other denominations. We would miss these people and erase them from the rolls, but at least they would go with our good wishes. Christmas Eve fell on Sunday. We observed it with a Christmas pageant planned and directed by Mrs. Baucom and Mrs. Robert O. Creech.

By December 1944 the church committee organization was transformed, and the nominating committee had many more positions to fill. We now had committees on membership, communion service, emergency and sickness, the WMU Committee on County Missions, house and janitorial, fellowship and ushers, all deacons, "To Those in Service" (Billy Crute's daddy was one of them), premises and repairs, music, pulpit supply, Boy Scouts, publicity, baptismal service, and budget or finance. This last was a large group of ten, of whom six were ex officio (deacons' chairman, WMU president, church treasurer, Sunday School superintendent, BTU leader, and church clerk). In

^{3.} *WDT*, June 6, 1944.

^{4.} *WDT*, August 4, 1944.

^{5.} WDT, August 8, 15, 1944. Most new cases of the disease showed up in the summer, and rightly or wrongly, people associated it with swimming pools. Just what caused the upsurge of polio in the United States remains unknown, since the development of successful vaccines in the next decade almost eliminated polio in the nation and there was no pressing need for further research.

addition, there was a full panoply of Sunday School officers for the first time. The existence of a publicity committee is especially interesting.

A series of revival meetings began April 9, with Dr. J. Clyde Turner, pastor of FBC in Greensboro, who had been with us in 1920, as guest preacher. Services were held in the mornings at half past ten and each evening at eight. Thursday evening turned out to be of special interest. At 5:49 p.m. the news went over the wires that President Roosevelt had died, and the *Daily Times* had an extra out on the streets an hour later. Most Wilsonians were home listening to the radio that night, but there was a packed house at First Baptist. Maybe they were there for the revival, or maybe they expected something special because of the day's shattering event, but Dr. Turner seems to have gone on with the sermon he had planned.⁶ On Saturday morning at eleven o'clock there was a special union service in front of the courthouse. The pastor of Five Points read the Scripture (FDR's favorite, 1 Corinthians 13), and Mr. Baucom gave the closing prayer.⁷ The gathering may have been the largest in Wilson's history, even larger than the crowds that turned out for the Ham-Ramsey revival in 1924.

We began 1945 with two neat developments. Lottie Collins (Mrs. D. L.) was hired as part-time secretary for the church, and maybe because of this, the records from this point on are typewritten. We also had a new clerk, S. G. Chappell, the local school superintendent, but the typewritten min-



Lottie Collins (Dr. David Collins)

utes are probably due to Mrs. Collins's service. Together, Chappell composing and Collins typing, they wrote a letter February 17, 1945, expressing thanks to the James I. Miller Tobacco Company for a generous gift the firm had made to the church's building fund. We promised to "keep in mind the tremendous boost that your donation is making to the program which we hope to be ready for when hostilities cease over yonder." During the last months of the war, the church advertised that it was open for prayer from four to six each afternoon, during the time when people would be getting off work downtown.

Our minutes for Wednesday, May 9, 1945, make no mention of it, but the day

^{6.} WDT, April 13, 1945.

^{7.} WDT, April 14, 1945.

before was V-E Day. All German resistance to the Allied armies had ceased. In its May 8 edition, the *Wilson Daily Times* had a special supplement, no doubt made ready well in advance, containing names and photos of all Wilson County service members, as well as a few sentences about each, taking special note of those who had died. If you have a copy of this in the attic, be careful with it: you have a rare item, but it's in delicate condition by now. The war ended in August. Atomic bombs destroyed Hiroshima and Nagasaki on August 6 and 9, respectively, and on August 15 Emperor Hirohito formally announced Japan's surrender. The next Sunday, August 18, FBC held a special thanksgiving service in the evening, featuring a roll call of service members and recognition of all their families. The church was packed.

We still couldn't get settled on the procedure for electing deacons. A new method was put into effect in July. The nominating committee had been nominating more candidates than there were places to be filled, but this caused embarrassment to those who were often nominated but never elected. Now we asked the nominating committee to suggest only one name for each position, with any additional nominations to be made from the floor. By September the building committee had organized itself, with D. J. Thurston as chairman. Thurston was the operator of Thurston Motor Lines, a successful local business. He had been in the church ten years. We were fortunate to have two wealthy, astute businessmen active in the plans for the future: D. J. Thurston and James I. Miller.

The year 1945 appears to have been the last year in which we excluded, or disfellowshipped a member. The annual associational reports include a





(*Left*) James I. Miller (Miller Thomas, © Raines & Cox) and (*right*) D. J. Thurston (North Carolina Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill)

statistical table which up through this year has a column in which a church would give the number of members it excommunicated. This year we listed one, and we are the only church in the association to report any at all. In fact, this column has been mostly empty for years, and 1945 is the last year in which the column even appears. In 1944 the figures say we disfellowshipped seven members. None of these actions are recorded in the church minutes. We seem to have become very discreet about it. In the alphabetical listing of church members in our own records for the years 1938–1959, there is a notation of date of dismissal beside very few names, none of which I can associate with the actions reported to the association. In fact, it is quite possible that these dates were placed in the wrong column and that they were actually removals by letter or by erasure, meaning that nothing had been seen of these members for a long time and nobody knew where they were.

On Friday, February 7, 1946, the need for a new church plant came home to us quite forcefully when the city building inspector appeared before a meeting of church leaders and told us that we were forbidden to continue using the auditorium in its present condition. The walls were weak. A public notice would be posted that the corner building housing the auditorium was condemned. This meeting was held in the "church annex," as we had come to call the building that was our new church when we occupied it in 1894, when Dr. Mundy was pastor. The annex was not condemned. Dr. Erick Bell explained that an offer of \$35,000 had been made for our property, and a motion was passed that it be accepted. There were three votes against it, one of which was Mr. Miller's, who requested that his name be recorded as opposed. For the time being the men decided to take advantage of an offer made by Atlantic Christian College (ACC) to use their campus. Preaching would be in Howard Chapel and nearby classrooms used for the Sunday School activities that met in the Pine and Nash building. We would continue to use the annex for classes and other activities that usually took place there. A motion was then made that we put the current property up for sale to the highest bidder. Mr. Miller seconded that motion and, after its passage, went on to move that the church proceed immediately to engage an architect and get to work on a new building to be erected as soon as possible.

And so it was that on Sunday, February 10, 1946, we met in Howard Chapel on the ACC campus. We had one long business meeting. The entire minutes of the Friday meeting were read, and often reread, as the report was discussed and picked apart in great detail. As a result we concluded, as a church, that we would put all our holdings on Pine Street up for sale, but for at least \$35,000; that we reserved the right to any furnishings on the property we wanted to keep; and that we would employ an architect and get right down to business on a new church. Sale of the church would be contingent on our being able to use it until January 1948 at the latest. Mr. Baucom explained

that the Sunday School rooms in the corner building were still usable, even though the auditorium was condemned. The pastor was authorized to make such arrangements for temporary meeting quarters as seemed appropriate. Prayer meeting on Wednesday, February 13, was held in the annex, and Mr. Miller brought up a matter that had not yet been addressed: the organ. After consulting with musicians, he had concluded that the organ should be dismantled by the manufacturers and reconditioned, so as to be usable in the new building. The church agreed with this. A move to simplify routine business was taken: the pastor and clerk were empowered to issue church letters upon request, without taking up time in business meetings with it. Instead, a report should be made to the next church conference. We also decided that the ten-day revival planned for April should be cut down to one week.

A called meeting was held in Howard Chapel on Thursday, February 21. It had been determined that the present auditorium could be reconditioned for continued use for an indefinite period for the sum of twenty-five hundred dollars, bid by W. M. Jones, "a competent contractor." The fire warden and the building inspector agreed. We agreed to do this, but going on a motion made by Sue Pettus that the money be raised by free-will offerings, not taken from the building fund. That was also agreed, with \$510 in pledges raised on the spot. It is not unusual at this time to have women listed as participating in discussions, but this is probably the first time a woman is recorded as actually initiating a motion. Maybe she started something. At the March 13 meeting Gertrude McLean moved that the church secretary's salary be raised from \$100 a week to \$125. Then Mrs. Blount said we had to do something about the looks of the yard around the annex. We passed a motion to that effect, and the pastor appointed a committee of three—Mrs. Blount, Mrs. Pettus, and Howell Moss—to get it done. It seems that we were back in the auditorium by July, with steel beams holding it up.

In 1946 things were on the upswing. The economy was coming back to life, and so were our resources. Not only could we act on the building of a new church; we could also raise the secretary's salary, spend money on fixing things up, and, at an April meeting, almost casually authorize someone to see that the "nursery department" and the Sunday School get some better equipment. The Southern Baptist Convention was to be held in Miami, and the pastor suggested we appoint as "delegates" anyone who wished to go—assuming that some people would be able to afford the trip. Miami is a long journey from just about anywhere; the very fact that the convention arranged to meet there meant that all over the South, times were better. In July Mr. and Mrs. Ed T. Stallings had to leave us for some reason. We really regretted that. For four years she had served as our organist, and for three years he had played the violin at services. There are numbers of people still around who remember the sweet music he brought out of that violin. A while

back the church had considered hiring a part-time educational director, but the Stallings' departure left open the possibility of hiring one person as both educational and music director. In July we also entered into an agreement with North Carolina Theaters, Inc., to sell them our properties on Pine and Nash for \$35,000, to be turned over to them on or before June 30, 1949. In August we signed a contract with architect H. Raymond Weeks. We had a "day kindergarten school" at this time. It has not come up before, but Mr. Baucom told the church that the deacons had decided the kindergarten's expenses should be a part of the regular budget. In October the deacons announced that they had approved the purchase of a sound motion picture projector, whereupon Mrs. Baucom announced that Clyde had already bought it: a Bell & Howell. Mr. Baucom didn't waste time. Ten years earlier spending money on a movie projector would have been an outlandish notion. Happy days were here again. The hit songs were being sung by Frank Sinatra, Frankie Laine, Dinah Shore, Bing Crosby, Jo Stafford, and Vaughn Monroe. Songs that were happy, funny, and maybe a bit sweetly sentimental.

In 1947 we find incorporated into the church books for the first time a highly detailed proposed budget for the year, with a page and a half of line items. A highlight of the year was the ordination of James O. Mattox, a young man who joined us in June 1936. It was held Sunday afternoon, May 25. Participating were E. W. Holmes, pastor of FBC Farmville; H. C. Lowder, of Arlington Street Baptist Church of Rocky Mount; G. N. Cowan, retired pastor of FBC Rocky Mount; and, of course, Clyde Baucom. Brother Holmes gave the sermon and Brother Baucom the ordination prayer. The congregation sang "Faith of Our Fathers" and "The Church's One Foundation," and afterward the Mercer Philathea class, to which the Rev. Mr. Mattox's mother belonged, served refreshments in the annex.

Mattox had a stout, confident, dignified career. During the Korean War he served in the army as a chaplain and earned the Bronze Star for meritorious service. Back in civilian life he pastored three North Carolina churches during his career: Hertford Baptist Church, FBC in Red Springs, and FBC in Rutherfordton. He was active in denominational affairs at the state level and participated in local civic activities wherever he lived. He died in Raleigh on February 26, 1983.

We had our first full-time, honest-to-goodness minister of music on hand Sunday, August 31, 1947: Miss Bruce O'Quinn. (She went by "Brucie.") She stayed with us through June 1949. We will meet her again in a later chapter.

In November 1947 the Silas Lucas property at Park and Nash was to go on public auction. Mr. Miller urged that the church buy it, if it could be had reasonably, because we could then build for our immediate needs and still have land left for later expansion. He had consulted with the architect, who

thought the cost of purchase would be offset by reduced costs on the entire building project. We bought it for fifteen thousand dollars in December.

By March 1948 we decided we just had to do something to relieve the crowding in the Sunday Schools, so we asked the trustees to arrange for us to make use of the Silas Lucas property as soon as possible for that purpose, and to use the Scout Hut (the "log cabin") on Nash at Daniel Street for a young men's classroom. Mr. Baucom discussed some other matters at this business meeting, such as the possibility of a junior church service, and of publicly recognizing visitors. Most of us thought sending a letter would be better than public recognition. We are a cautious people. It's interesting that the pastor would have asked us what we thought about such a minor matter rather than just going ahead with it.

At a business meeting called after church on Sunday, September 11, 1949, the Building Committee was ready to make a report with some plans that had been previously mailed to church members. We resolved (1) that the committee make minor changes without seeking church approval, (2) that the architect proceed with plans sufficient for the letting out of bids for construction, and (3) that the committee be empowered to seek bids on the sanctuary and educational building separately or as a whole. It is clear enough that by this time we had determined that the new church plant would consist of two separate buildings, a sanctuary and educational building. It's noteworthy that the term "sanctuary" is used, not "auditorium." This is a break with former usage. Also, James I. Miller raised an important point concerning the placement of the pulpit. For any reader not familiar with FBC, we have a sanctuary with a divided chancel; the pulpit is on one side and the lectern on the other. This was most likely Mr. Baucom's idea; he was very proud of the church's architecture, and he was familiar with American Baptist Convention practices. Divided chancels are more common among the American Baptists. (The new hymnals we bought for the church were published by the ABC, and he used some ABC literature, at least for some youth work. The treasurer's reports for these years have recurring payments to the American Baptist Publication Board for literature.) Most Southern Baptist churches, of course, have a central pulpit, but occasionally there is a chancel area like ours, especially among churches in the East. This meeting appears to have been when this matter was determined. It sounds like Mr. Miller may have had some misgivings, but it's hard to imagine the matter passing if he had strong objection. There was a long discussion, and when a standing vote was called for, most people stood in favor, and no one stood against it, although there were those who did not vote at all. In the typed records of the minutes this is described as "the placing of the altar." Someone has crossed through the word "altar" and written "pulpit," which of course is the correct term, since a Baptist church would not have an altar at all, in the literal sense. The correction was made by church vote at the next meeting.

By 1950 it was clear that we had emerged from a long, dark period of economic depression and world war. The boys were back home—well, they might be off to college under the GI Bill. People had money in their pockets again, and there were things in the stores to buy—without ration books to worry about. New cars were in the showrooms and on the streets. Church attendance was good. And on May 7, we at First Baptist held a triple celebration. It was our ninetieth birthday. It was Homecoming Day. And best of all, we were going to break ground for that long-dreamed-of new church building. We began with a meeting in the auditorium at Pine and Nash, but then all six hundred or so of us marched together down Nash Street to the site of our future home and held a groundbreaking. Dr. Bagby came up from Buies Creek to be our guest speaker. We joined in a litany of dedication. The ceremonial groundbreaking was performed by Dr. Herman Easom, chairman of the Board of Deacons; D. J. Thurston, Jr., chairman of the Building Committee; Clyde P. Harris, Jr., chairman of the Plans Committee; C. C. Powell, Sunday School superintendent; Mrs. Herman Easom, president of the WMU; Mrs. Letha Baucom, director of the Training Union; and Roy B. Webb, president of the Brotherhood. Somehow we had gotten a piano down there so that Mr. and Mrs. Stallings, who were with us again, could perform a piano and violin duet. We all sang "Blest Be the Tie That Binds," had a blessing, and lit into a picnic dinner on the grounds. It was a great day.

The next month North Korean forces invaded South Korea, and two days later, on June 27, President Truman ordered American forces into action.

Chapter 23

Mount Pisgah's Lofty Height

1952-1961 (Clyde E. Baucom)

My days are passed, my plans are shattered, and so are the desires of my heart.

—JOB 17:11 NIV

The Building Of the New Church would take us two and a half years. In September 1950 D. J. Thurston, chairman of the Building Committee, reported that we had failed to raise the \$125,000 we had earlier said we would want to have in hand before proceeding with the building. He recommended that we vote away that restriction and start immediately, confident the funds would come. In form of a motion, it passed with two dissenting votes.

Edward T. Stallings, our beloved violinist, died February 17, 1951. By trade Mr. Stallings was part owner of a print shop, but he was a classically trained musician who had once played with the Boston Pops. He taught violin at ACC for more than twenty-five years. He was actually not a member of our church. He was a Methodist, but we considered him one of ours. His funeral was at FBC, with Mr. Baucom conducting the services, assisted by Robert Bradshaw and Cecil Jarman, the pastors of First Methodist and First Christian, respectively. Edward's wife Betty died in July 1983.

Sunday, May 6, 1951, was another ceremonious occasion. Dr. Ellis was up from Miami to preach at the morning service. After it was over, we once again marched down from Pine and Nash to Park and Nash, where there was a laying of the cornerstone for the new building. The stone was fashioned

from granite block that served for over thirty years as a mounting stone for people using horses and carriages at the old Silas Lucas home, recently razed. A special box containing mementoes was placed within it. There are clippings from the *Wilson Daily Times* with news about the forthcoming building of the church; a list of the membership, including those who joined this morning; and other old items that were taken from the cornerstone of the old building. Mr. Baucom led in a litany of readings from Chronicles, and there was special choral music directed by Mrs. Stallings. After it all we had a picnic on the lawn at the nearby home of Mrs. John F. Bruton.¹

On the next Wednesday night, *Father's Little Dividend*, a movie with Spencer Tracy and Elizabeth Taylor, opened at the Wilson Theater with a big diaper-changing contest, open to all married men in Wilson County. Probably not many gents at the time had all that much experience with diaper changing.

For help during the summer months of 1951 we hired a recent Wake Forest College graduate, Vann Murrell, who moved to Wilson with his wife Ina in June and was immediately immersed in Vacation Bible School. As one activity the children made little stools in the shape of turtles. Vann called all the turtles "Herman," only to find out that the chairman of the diaconate was Dr. Herman Easom. Vann did some radio preaching for us from six-thirty to seven in the mornings for a couple of weeks, and he would introduce the speakers at the morning service as well as preach the evening services during the month that Mr. Baucom was on vacation. Mrs. Collins, the church secretary, took her vacation at the same time, so Ina Murrell sat in for her. During this time, each Monday, Vann and Ina would open the offering envelopes for the day before and record the amounts. He shudders today at what a horrible idea this was. On the first Monday at this job, he called out to Ina, "James I. Miller, one hundred dollars." Then it dawned on him that the check was for one thousand dollars. A thousand-dollar check from Mr. Miller would be in each Sunday's offering. In July, the Murrells took a group of our young people to Ridgecrest. One Sunday evening after he had preached, Mrs. Pettus met him at the door and told him, "Vann, you're not a world-famous preacher, but you have good termination qualities." Now that's something for a young preacher to remember! He returned to preach for us in October 1958 and was pleased to encounter some old college friends, like Dr. Lewis Lee.²

Vann Murrell went on to Southeastern Seminary and later earned a PhD in New Testament studies from the University of Edinburgh. After three

^{1.} WDT, May 4, 5, 7, 1951.

^{2.} Personal communication to the author, March 21, 2008; letter to Mr. and Mrs. Baucom, April 16, 1958, and to Mr. Baucom, October 28, 1958, in the Clyde Espy Baucom Papers in the Baptist Collection at Wake Forest University.

years in the pastorate he taught religion a few years at Campbell, but he spent most of his career at Gardner-Webb. After retiring there, he took a pastorate again at Brookwood Baptist in Jacksonville, North Carolina, and stayed there ten years. He's now retired and living in Swansboro. He remembers us well.

In July 1951 we began discussions for the planting of a new Baptist church in Wilson. By the next April a survey had been taken of the area around College Courts Apartments. Mr. Baucom told us there were about 270 people there who expressed a preference for a Baptist church. They would constitute the core of the new congregation, which would later become Grace Baptist. In August we increased the number of deacons to twenty-four and began electing six to office each year, for a four-year term.

We began 1952 by borrowing \$150,000 from Jefferson Standard Life Insurance Company. Mr. Thurston explained that this would be necessary to pay off the contractors for the building and provide reasonable furnishings. The loan was subsequently renegotiated with Branch Banking and Trust Company on terms somewhat more convenient for the church's needs.

On Sunday, May 4, we held another march down the street. We called this one our Inspiration March, and we got a chance to walk through the still-unfinished interior. Like Dr. Mundy before him, Clyde Baucom oversaw the placement of every brick in the building. He knew it inside out and upside down and devoted a lot of his energy to seeing that everything was done just right. Mildred Grissom, who was working for him during those years, says she saw him yank wires out of the wall if he thought they didn't belong there. The building was his obsession. The pastor's study was the special project of Russell Stephenson. He carefully designed it, with its rich woodwork, in honor of his mother. To the end of his life he saw that this room was in proper shape.

Both Clyde and Letha Baucom are remembered as strong, staid personalities. If Mr. Baucom had not finished his sermon by twelve o'clock, he'd simply tell people to put their purses down and take their coats off—he wasn't finished. Mrs. Baucom would often sit in the balcony so as to keep the young people up there from making too much disturbance, but often she would fall asleep.

The last day of September was an important day for churches all over the country. It was publication day for the long-awaited Revised Standard Version of the Bible, and celebrations were held nationwide. Wilson's event was held at First Methodist. Our Mr. Baucom introduced the speaker, Dr. Olin T. Binkley of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest. Special editions of the new translation were given to five representative citizens, as was done all over the nation that evening.

All during the year we watched as the outer walls rose from the ground and the inner rooms took shape. The women of the church had for some time

worked tirelessly raising money by selling chicken stew, collards, sweet potatoes, and potato salad out of "the barn" on the site of the new church. Originally it had been a carriage house for the Silas Lucas family. Vera Womble remembered baking as many as ten pecan pies a day to sell for \$1.25 each. One of our own members, Mid Elrod, oversaw the masonry work. Russell Stephenson's Millwork did the interior woodwork. With the end in sight, on November 12 we passed a resolution commending Mr. and Mrs. Clyde E. Baucom for all their work these past nine years. On December 14 Mr. Collins, the church clerk, records a church conference held in what he now describes as "the old church at Pine & Nash Streets."

The climactic day was Sunday, December 22, 1952. This was the day we had dreamed of since 1923, when we formally expressed dissatisfaction with our seventeen-year-old building. For the last several months our Sunday School had been meeting in at least five different buildings at the same time: the old church auditorium, the "annex," the old parsonage, a nearby American Legion hall, and a smaller building on the same property as the Legion hall. This Sunday we all came to Sunday School in the stately, elegantly proportioned new structure at Park and Daniel, which had cost us about \$491,000. About nine hundred people showed up for the first worship service. At the evening service the choir presented a special program of Christmas music.

Another candidate for the ministry presented himself March 1, 1953.



Marion Lineberger (North Carolina Baptist Collection, Z. Smith Reynolds Library, Wake Forest University)

This was Charles A. Webster, Jr., then a student at Duke. We licensed him to preach. July 11, 1954, was the occasion for the ordination of two young men: Marion T. Lineberger, of our church, who was pastor of the mission at Kincaid and Adams, and L. V. High, Jr., assistant pastor at Five Points. The sermon was preached by Dr. Kincheloe of Rocky Mount and the prayer given by Mr. Baucom. Lineberger, a native of Gaston County and a Furman graduate, served as the first pastor of Grace Baptist Church from 1954 to 1958. Grace Baptist began in 1953 as a joint mission venture of First, Five Points, and New Hope Baptist churches. We will have more to say about Lineberger in chapter 31.

On October 15 Hurricane Hazel

roared its way through town on its way up to Canada, where it killed more people than in the United States. A hurricane was also about to hit popular culture. The hit songs that Mom listened to as she went about her housework were still gentle and sort of sweet, but Sun Records in Memphis released Elvis Presley's first record this year, while Bill Haley and the Comets turned "Rock Around the Clock" loose on a teenage world about to be inundated with the new transistor radios. Young people, now starting to get around on four wheels rather than two, were freed from the family radio set and were tuning in to a world their parents didn't understand.

In 1954, soon after Lineberger's ordination, Grace Baptist Church was officially organized. After they met certain financial requirements, in 1957, we deeded the property over to them. They took the sage advice of the Wilson Baptist Council, expressed in a letter to what was being called the "Corbett Avenue Mission": that to avoid possible future inconvenience, they not name themselves for a city street. We granted nineteen of our own members letters to join Grace. In 1955 the South Roanoke Association came into being, with FBC Wilson among the participating churches. In May 1955 the Boy Scout troop and its leaders bought a truck and donated it to FBC for the exclusive use of Boy Scout work. By 1956 it was evident that the enlargement of the church would necessitate an enlargement of the paid staff, and we created a permanent personnel committee to deal with positions such as "office or clerical help, educational and choral leadership, organist or instrumentalists, custodial help, and all other paid people as the church may from time to time agree are necessary to further promote the aims and program of the church."

The 1950s were a pretty quiet time in the country. Eisenhower made a campaign promise to "go to Korea" if he were elected. He was and he did, and, after studying the prospects and the terrain, decided to bring the war to a close with an armistice. It was signed on July 17, 1953, satisfying no one's war aims but ending the killing. The Supreme Court handed down the Brown v. Board of Education decision on May 17, 1954, and although this led to some tense moments over the rest of the decade, its full implications would not strike until the next. In the early 1950s everyone was scared to death of polio, but Wilson got by easily. Apparently the only case was one of our church family. K. D. and Dorothy Kennedy's two-and-a-half-year-old daughter Susan woke up one morning unable to walk, and Dr. Josephine Melchior, Wilson's popular pediatrician, along with Dr. Erick Bell of our own congregation, gave the parents the dread diagnosis. The house was quarantined. Susan received good treatment, however, and eventually came out of it okay. Soon effective vaccines were developed, and the disease was pretty well stopped dead in its tracks in North America. Children of middle- to upper-income families were affected out of proportion to others, perhaps because poorer children had developed immunity by low-level exposure to the virus in unclean drinking water.

Things were pretty quiet on the church front, too. The church was growing along with the American middle class, sharing in the population boom that followed the war years. Families came to church with the daughters wearing pretty dresses and the little boys wearing jackets with shirt collars spread out on the lapels, and both mother and father wearing dress hats. And that was before air conditioning.

In 1957 the Southern Baptist Convention was pushing what it called the Forward Program for Church Finance; a resolution we passed described the program as "God's plan rather than man's." Rather remarkable that no one realized what God's plan was until the SBC discovered it in 1957. It was actually a rather involved program of drumming up support in the fall for an intensive stewardship campaign involving an every-member canvass, with church members going out knocking on doors to get pledges. During this time Mr. Baucom engaged the services of a Southeastern student, Thellis Myers, because he had had some experience with the Forward Program back home in Mississippi. He came and served as youth director until August 1959.

As part of the Forward Program, FBC began publishing each fall four issues of a four-page leaflet called *The Forerunner*, with articles about stewardship, the coming campaign, and pictures of our members studiously planning it. It all culminated on a Stewardship Sunday, followed by a gigantic covered-dish supper called the Loyalty Dinner, which was such a big deal we had to rent space in the American Legion Hall or the Wilson Recreation Center. Most features of the Forward Program have disappeared, and the demise of the every-member canvass saddened no one. We still present our pledge cards annually, however, and our November Loyalty Dinner is still a highlight of the church year, although now we can accommodate everyone in our own facilities.

We began a serious search for a full-time minister of music. Mrs. Jennie Lee had been directing the choir, and we had a series of people playing the organ. Jennie was ready to get back into the choir, and the church was ready for a vigorous but controlled development of the program. We hired Don Hinshaw, who turned out to be an inspired choice. We'll hear more of him in chapter 29.

In the summer of 1959 we took a major step toward solving a long-standing problem. The Baucoms evidently were not satisfied with the conditions of the pastorium (as we were now calling the parsonage) on Daniel Street, so the church put it up for sale and appointed a committee to select a new one. The committee found a property at 211 Raleigh Road and reported it to the church on July 26. The motion to purchase it was debated exten-

sively and carefully. Mr. A. B. Carroll then made a substitute motion: that the church discontinue its policy of providing a home for the pastor and that we increase his salary to the point that he could provide living quarters of his own choice. This was pretty surely what the Baucoms preferred. The substitute motion passed overwhelmingly. The Baucoms eventually bought a home at 104 North Bruton Street.

Our centennial year was 1960. We celebrated with a week of services. Sunday, May 1, started us off with an impressive morning worship, beginning with a processional. The choir's anthem was "Surely the Lord Is in This Place." Jennie Lee sang a solo, "Build Thee More Stately Mansions," before an address by a guest speaker, Dr. George D. Heaton, a founder of Myers Park Baptist Church in Charlotte but at the time working in the psychology of labor-management relations. The speaker for the evening service was the pastor of First Presbyterian, R. Murphy Williams. Greetings were brought by Arthur Wenger, president of ACC; George Williard, city school superintendent; W. A. Lucas of the Wilson County Bar Association; and our own Dr. Eugene Neeland, representing the health-care community, or, as we put it then, the "curative institutions."

In 1960 we appointed an air-conditioning committee to look into the possibility of cooling the entire facility. The fellowship hall was already air-conditioned, but its primitive equipment was noisy, and some folks were afraid that air-conditioning the whole church would mean noisy worship services and Sunday School classes. It's hard for people now to remember that as late as 1960 if you wanted to cool off in the summer you pretty much had to go to a movie theater or a bank. Lack of air-conditioning was awfully good for the Wilson Tobs, though, and baseball in general.

Speaking of baseball, a glance at a monthly finance record for 1960 makes one wonder what the good folks back in 1860 would have thought to see on the budget of *their* church an expenditure of \$17.25 for softballs and bats for the church team. Or \$17.50 for toilet tissue. What is toilet tissue, they'd ask, and why would the church need it? How about seventy-two cents to Shealy's Bake Shoppe for "cupcakes for the choir"? Fifty years later it's hard for us to understand some of them ourselves: one dollar to Five Points Nursery and Floral shop for "baby shoe"? This was a regular expense, almost monthly. When a new baby was born into the church family, we would buy a little plant for the new mother, and it was planted in a little container that was called a "baby shoe." In 1960 we splurged on six dollars for lemons for the centennial. In 1960 that would have bought enough lemons to make a lot of lemonade.

In the latter part of 1960 and the first of 1961 several matters were pending. The Farmer property on Park Avenue adjacent to our land was available for purchase, and while we wanted it, we didn't want to pay the asking price.

Mr. Baucom called attention to "the possibility of the [deacons] having to take a stand on the matter of dancing, however, he was not now asking that any action be taken." I imagine the deacons were relieved to hear that. After all, it was only in 1957 that Wake Forest College (by this time in Winston-Salem) went through a spasm of national publicity when students protesting the school's no-dancing policy marched out of chapel and started an all-day dance. One of the numbers: "Whole Lotta Shakin' Goin' On." An age of innocence it was; no one could foresee the fell times we would be facing ten years thence.

In April we engaged the services of Dan Shingleton, a member who was an ACC student, as part-time assistant in religious education. Dan directed the youth program on Sunday evenings and took the young people on occasional trips. On May 7 Mr. Baucom went down to Clemson, South Carolina, to take part in the ordination of Charles A. Webster, Jr., who was from our church. At the time Webster was associate pastor of Clemson Baptist Church and BSU director at Clemson University. The next year he gained a bit of notoriety. When Harvey Gantt was seeking admission to Clemson as the first black student, Webster tried to ease the way for him by calling the registrar to ask for an appointment. He was eventually fired for being involved in a "subversive plot to integrate the college." President Edwards of Clemson seems to have put pressure on the deacons. When asked why Gantt's application should be treated differently from that of other students, Edwards replied, "Most students who are interested in education and come to be interviewed, they come and present themselves to the admission office. . . . Mr. Gantt . . . didn't come to the college. [He] went to the Baptist church." In 1966 Webster was doing doctoral work at Duke, writing a dissertation titled "Religious Motifs in Far Right Organizations and Movements," while serving as interim BSU chaplain at NCSU.4 Webster never finished his doctoral work. He became personally and deeply involved in the civil rights movement. His son Al remembers an occasion when his dad was driving one night and came across a KKK meeting, hooded figures and all. There was a cross there, wrapped in kerosene-soaked burlap, ready to be lit. Somehow Webster managed to steal the thing. He put it in his car and took off down the road with the Klan in hot pursuit. Little Al had nightmares about the episode for years afterward, dreams with pointy-headed men waving torches. Webster placed it as a prize of war in the chapel of the American Friends Service Committee. Charlie knew the leaders of the civil rights movement:

^{3.} Burke and Gergel, *Matthew J. Perry*, 204–205; Baptist Press release of March 29, 1963; *BR*, April 6, 1963.

^{4.} Raleigh Times, May 23, 1966.

Hosea Williams, Andrew Young, and all of the King family. In fact, he joined Ebenezer Baptist, MLK Jr.'s church in Atlanta.

During the Vietnam War he worked with the American Friends (Quaker) Service Committee to help war protesters. Charlie was in a dangerous line of work, and it was probably not simply because he was a hunter that he carried guns in the trunk of his car. His friend John Stone told him that he was the best-armed pacifist he ever saw. The only thing Stone ever saw him kill was a hapless possum that went ambling across a churchyard one night.

All that was noble work, but it didn't produce an income. His son Al allows as how his father never did decide what he wanted to do when he grew up. He made a pioneering effort at ethanol production, but Hurricane Hugo wiped him out. Later he tried real estate. After a couple of disabling strokes, he now lives in a nursing facility in the Atlanta area.⁵

Our air-conditioning issue brought out some simmering discontent that some people had with the pastor. Word got around that now that the church was out of debt, he wanted us to get back into debt to get the air-conditioning done. Mr. Baucom brought that rumor up at a deacon's meeting and asked the deacons to quell it when they heard it. He felt himself on the defensive.

Mr. Baucom's long and worthy pastorate did not end happily. He was a demanding person, a perfectionist with a controlling tendency. When Lottie Collins was his secretary she would resign almost every day, but then be back at work the next morning. The pastor put his body and soul into the planning and construction of the new church, and at one point James I. Miller had to remind him that the church consisted of the people, not just the pastor. By the time the new building was completed, he had finished that part of his ministry that he was best adapted for, and he had stepped on a lot of toes. On one occasion he met with Al and Mildred Grissom at the Creamery and confessed to them that he was distressed about something: he had put so much of his effort into putting up the new building that he had lost his zeal for winning souls to Christ. He was never known as an outstanding preacher, and he was not good with children. As the 1950s wore on, discontent began to rise with his leadership. It came to a head in May 1961, when a group of church leaders began meeting from time to time, apparently to find a way for Mr. Baucom to make a graceful exit. He felt the pressure, especially when there was a meeting in which the participants intended to discuss his future among themselves. When he insisted on being present, Naomi Morris personally escorted him from the room. Miss Morris (known to friends as "Peanut") was a prominent local lawyer and later a judge, and one did not want to cross her. Mr. Baucom's aggressive will met its match in hers. There

^{5.} Information on Webster's later career is from telephone conversations with John Stone and Al Webster.

were meetings in homes. Mr. Baucom knew, or thought he knew, who was participating, and on May 19, 1952, he wrote a long, bitter, accusatory letter to them.⁶ There was hardly any going back from that point. It did not help that Mrs. Baucom, whom all agree was a wonderfully gracious lady, had a tendency to feel persecuted.

Mr. Baucom in effect pled for time in which to find another position. He fairly soon received and accepted an offer from FBC in McLean, Virginia, a suburb of Washington. He then submitted his resignation, on July 17, 1961. His letter was brief, but kind and appreciative. James I. Miller wrote an appropriate reply:

My Dear Friends:

I have carefully and sympathetically read your letter of the 17th ulto., and it makes me very happy to have your reiteration of the splendid opportunity you feel that you will have in McLean, Virginia....

I personally feel that you have done an excellent work in Wilson, and that you came here at exactly the right time, as the church here was fully ripe for a strenuous drive to get away from the very crude and unattractive and totally inadequate facilities we had at Nash and Pine, and I am glad to put into print what I have privately expressed many times and what I know to be true: that you had your full part in leading us into the lovely and commodious facilities that we have at Nash and Park Avenue. . . .

... it is my most earnest wish and heart-felt prayer that you will be happy and contented and very successful at McLean.⁷

Some members of FBC, led by Lewis and Jennie Lee, felt especially bad at the sad circumstances of the Baucoms' leaving, and made them a gift of a handsome desk, which Mr. Baucom placed in his home study in Virginia. The Baucoms wrote a warm note of thanks the next January. The church did need new leadership and was ready for change, but Mr. Baucom left with a broken heart.

After serving the church in McLean, Virginia, for two years, Clyde and Letha retired to Swansboro. He passed away in the Onslow Memorial Hos-

- 6. The letter is in private hands.
- 7. James I. Miller to Mr. and Mrs. Baucom, August 1, 1961, Clyde Espy Baucom Papers, Baptist Collection at Wake Forest University. The abbreviation "ulto." refers to a day of the previous month.
- 8. Letha and Clyde Baucom to Dear Christian Friends, January 12, 1962, Clyde Espy Baucom Papers, Baptist Collection at Wake Forest University.

pital in Jacksonville on January 16, 1985. His funeral was held at the McGill Avenue Baptist Church in Concord,⁹ the church he had pastored before coming to Wilson. He was buried in Charlotte. Letha died at the Carteret General Hospital in Morehead City on January 4, 1993, and today lies beside Clyde in Charlotte's Evergreen Cemetery.

Chapter 24

Maturity

1962-1988 (William R. Bussey)

He shepherded them in singleness of heart, and guided them with skilful hand.

—PSALM 78:72 NEB

PULPIT SEARCH COMMITTEE was soon appointed, of course, but while they were searching, we had several good men serve as interim pastors. $oldsymbol{\hbar}$ We heard Broadus E. Jones, who had served as pastor at FBC in Raleigh and in Concord. We had Dr. R. Kelly White, pastor of Belmont Heights Baptist Church in Nashville, Tennessee, from 1952 to 1958, and then the first president of Belmont College in Nashville. Norfleet Gardner, recently retired from FBC of Henderson, was serving us when we suffered the loss of two outstanding members: Mrs. Mattie Harrison Moss died on May 20, 1962, and Mrs. Sue Blount Pettus passed away on August 29. These were two of the three frisky girls who got on that train to Elm City back in 1893 and attended that public dance. We kicked them out of the church for that, but what a loss to us it would have been if we had not taken them back! Kathryn Easom remembered their being as much fun in their old age as when they were young. Once sisters Sue and Gertie were driving somewhere, she recalled, but lost control of the car and drove into a ditch. Sue said, "Get off me, Gertie!" Gertie replied, "How can I get off you when you're on top of me?" Broadus Jones conducted the services for both ladies. Sue Pettus's nephew George W. Blount, by this time a Methodist minister, assisted at his aunt's funeral.

H. F. Kelly, who was on the search committee, received a call from a rela-

tive in South Carolina who had heard that we were looking for a pastor. She had one to recommend: the young preacher at FBC in Chester. The committee went down there, and before long William Royall Bussey came up here for a trial sermon on August 12, 1962. We offered him the job and he took us up on it, driving up on a Wednesday evening in late September during a hard rain with his wife Barbara and three daughters, Susan, Sally, and Marcia.

Bill Bussey, whose father before him was a Baptist preacher, was born in Richmond in 1921. The family actually lived in Andrews, South Carolina, but Mrs. Bussey had diabetes, and they went to a hospital in Richmond just for Bill's birth. An older brother had died during the flu epidemic of 1918. In 1929 they moved to Florence. Young Bussey attended Furman, and from there he entered the service in the Army Air Corps. He was a first lieutenant stationed in the South Pacific, working in air traffic control. He had intended a career in law but after the war opted for the ministry instead. When he told his father that he had decided to go to Southern Seminary, his father told him he had already signed him up. But first he married Barbara Johnson, a nurse at McLeod Infirmary in Florence whom he never met until after the war. They were wed August 14, 1947, at the First Presbyterian Church there. In Louisville Barbara was the seminary nurse while Bill completed his BD work. He was well on his way toward a PhD under Wayne Oates when the young couple lost a full-term baby boy. This was unsettling, to say the least, and finishing the degree lost its attraction. About this time an offer came from the church at Chester in November 1951. Bussey accepted, taking the pastorate of a historic church where the redoubtable Southern Baptist legend R. G. Lee had once been pastor and where he supervised the building of a new church which, like ours, had a divided chancel.

When the Busseys arrived in Chester, the new pastor decided he should dress the part. It was customary for the preacher to wear a Prince Albert frock coat with tails, and pin-striped pants. So he bought an outfit for one hundred dollars. But then he learned that a friend of his would be present at his first service, and Bill knew that the guy would laugh out loud to see him dressed like that, so he put it aside and never wore it. The church in Chester had special services on Pastor Bussey's last Sunday there on September 23, 1962, and in their bulletin wrote: "The services today conclude the pastorate of Rev. Mr. W. R. Bussey. They in no way conclude his ministry to this congregation or his influence in this community. These will continue and, for this reason, the services today are services of praise and gratitude." They were such lovely words that we put them in our own bulletin on Mr. Bussey's last Sunday as our pastor, January 24, 1988. A pastorate of over twenty-five years is not a record for a Baptist pastor, but it's certainly above average, and when it occurs it's either because the man rules his church with an iron hand or because his congregation loves him. We loved Bill Bussey. We were ready for a



William R. Bussey, 1969 (Wilson Times)

change, he seemed just the right fit, we welcomed him with open arms, and the ladies of the church—and of Wilson—were thrilled to have such a strikingly handsome man in the pulpit.

When Mr. Bussey came he wanted to get to know the members as soon as possible, so Dan Shingleton, as part of his duties, drove the new pastor around to meet folks. While sitting in the home of James I. Miller, who was eighty-five at the time, Mr. Miller seemed suspicious, and blurted out, "What do you want?" "Nothing. I'm just your new pastor," replied Mr. Bussey. Miller got his last church bulletin, looked

at the picture on the front, looked at his visitor, and said, "Well. I guess you are."

In February 1963 we started publishing a biweekly newsletter, *The First Baptist Church News*, now called *The Messenger*. Editions usually included a few paragraphs from the pastor or other church staff, along with church news, lists of the sick, announcements, and reports from organizations: Sunday School, Training Union, Girls' Auxiliary, Royal Ambassadors, Women's Missionary Union, Brotherhood, Boy Scouts, and Girl Scouts. In February 1964 the Beatles made their appearance on the Ed Sullivan Show. Just one month earlier Bob Dylan's new album was released, "The Times, They Are a-Changin'." Boy, were they ever!

William Bussey was pastor during those troubled years in the South when desegregation was a hot issue. Few white pastors were actually segregationists, but none wanted to lose their jobs, and very few were willing to. Most had to walk a narrow line. In Wilson FBC made a risky decision. On Thanksgiving Day the Wilson Ministers' Association planned the first community worship service in which African Americans took part and were invited to attend. This was publicized in the *Daily Times*, so that anyone who had problems with this could simply choose not to come. A few days before the service signs were posted on the outside of the church: "The Ku Klux Klan is watching you!" Mr. Bussey took it to be a sick joke.

The church was nearly full of worshippers at time for the service, many of them African Americans. Participating in the service were John Wilson, pastor of Covenant Presbyterian Church; W. S. Johnson, pastor of St. John's

AME Zion Church; John Pearsall, chaplain of Eastern North Carolina Sanitarium; Jim Allen, pastor of Calvary Presbyterian; James Wallace, pastor of First Christian; and Richard Ziglar, director of religious education at First Christian. Our pastor presided, and our choir, led by Don Hinshaw, provided special music. Just after the invocation, three hooded Klansmen in full regalia came down the center aisle and took seats in the second row in front of the lectern. Others remained standing at the back of the sanctuary, and some stood in the narthex, while still others milled about outside. When the three Klansmen were walking down the aisle, Susan Bussey, Mr. Bussey's young daughter, could be heard asking her mother, "Is that the Holy Ghost?"

Mr. Bussey was sitting beside Jim Allen, who was the first African American to speak. Mr. Allen was visibly nervous when he rose to read Scripture, and when he did, the three Klansmen at the front of the church got up and walked out. They joined the thirty or more picketing the church outside. The service went on, and let out about ten-thirty. As the congregants walked out through the Klansmen, Lucy Rogers, a woman who spoke her mind, chided one of them about respecting God's house. The man replied, "I don't respect n—r religion." Mr. Bussey and his family got in the car and drove down to Florence as planned to be with his family for Thanksgiving. But word got around about the event in Wilson, and ere long WRAL-TV from Raleigh was in town to cover the story. Since the pastor was gone, Horace Ricks, who was chair of the Board of Deacons at the time, stood in front of the church and talked to them.

The *Raleigh News & Observer* had an editorial about the incident and in essence said that the Klansmen should have stayed in that fine Wilson church for the service. There was even an article in the *New York Times*, in which Mr. Wilson of Covenant Presbyterian called the Klansmen's actions "sacrilegious." Mr. Bussey writes, "There was some tension afterward in the church over this service. One loyal member dropped out for ten years but eventually returned. By and large the congregation handled this episode with great poise and maturity." He added that in the following days the Klan burned crosses in the front yards of two white pastors, Larry Avant of First Presbyterian and John Wilson of Covenant Presbyterian. He jokes (I guess) that he felt slighted.

Some of the best moves Mr. Bussey made were in his hiring of key people. Among them were Clyde Patterson as minister of music, and a series of associates: Dale Sessions, Larry Bennett, Bill Edwards, and Burdette Robinson. A good bit of the activity during the Bussey pastorate (as well as subsequent pastorates) will be found in later chapters dealing with these men and women and the areas in which they made their contributions.

1. Calvary Presbyterian is an African American congregation.

Don Hinshaw resigned at the end of 1964, and Bob Sutter came in February 1965. Bob Sutter resigned as of October 15, 1967. Ross Albert from ACC helped us in the interim, until Betty Miller took the job February 1, 1968. Miss Miller did not stay with us long. She left for a similar position in Elizabeth City on June 1, 1969. (She was addressed, by the way, as Miss Miller. The title "Ms." was not dreamed up until 1971, and it remained controversial for a good while after that.) In November 1968, longtime member and church leader Arthur Ball Carroll left us for Hamilton Home, a Baptist assisted-living facility in Martin County. The home closed in 1968, and Mr. Carroll went to the Baptist Home in Winston-Salem, where he died of a sudden heart attack in 1974, at age ninety-two.

In early 1975 we bought the Harris property on the corner of Nash and Daniel, proposing to refashion it as an Activities Building. A detailed plan was presented in the *First Baptist News* for February 19. Russell Stephenson and Mickey Little believed the remodeling could be done for \$33,485, and they volunteered to see the project through if the church approved. We did. The plan provided for a couple of upstairs apartments that could be used by ACC students working with the church, or by other church personnel needing a convenient place of housing. Its first residents were Chuck and Vanda Miller in one apartment and Buddy Burgess across the hall. Rules for its use were published in September. The building came to be known simply as "the House," and it served its intended purpose well until it was razed in 2008.

In July 1975 we were pleased to send the Busseys, along with daughters Sally and Marcia, to Stockholm for the Baptist World Alliance meeting.

In August 1978 something happened at FBC that doesn't happen to many churches. We entrusted it to the White House as a communications center for President Carter's visit to Wilson on Saturday, August 5. Carter spoke to an audience gathered on the lawn of the Wilson County Public Library, one block down the street, but the church provided a convenient location for the news media and presidential staff. The fellowship hall was filled with as many as thirty teletype machines to serve the news media. Extensive wiring had to be done well in advance to prepare for all that equipment. The pastor's study became the office of Jody Powell, the president's press secretary, and the temporary location of the red telephone, the hotline that always accompanied the president and could send orders to launch missiles in response to an attack on the United States. Also in 1978, though much less spectacular, the American Bible Society committee preparing the translation of the apocryphal books for the Today's English Version of the Bible spent a week in June 1979 in the church library doing their work.

During the Vietnam War the church tried to do its part for the troops. The WMU in particular was writing letters to people in service and sending articles to express our concern. In 1968 Bobby Joyner returned from his

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tour of service. So did Elsie Simms's son. Elsie Simms was a black woman who did some of our cleaning work and helped with the young children in the nursery. She knew every square inch of that church and knew exactly where everything was, including places she could go to light up a cigarette. If surprised while smoking, she was known to actually swallow the thing. Mrs. Simms was keeping the nursery one Wednesday night in 1969 when our two small boys were the only children there. I was not at church that night, but my wife Carol was—probably for choir practice. When she went to get the boys, she offered to take Elsie home. Elsie—may I be forgiven for calling her by her first name, but that was part of the times—was very reluctant. Very reluctant, because of the tense racial feelings at the time—Martin Luther King had been shot only the year before—but she agreed. When Carol got to the railroad, however, Elsie absolutely insisted that she stop and let her out. She'd be all right, she said, but she didn't want Carol driving over there with those two children. Mrs. Simms retired after twenty-eight years service in June 1981, although she continued on a part-time basis for a while after that. We held a reception for Mrs. Simms—not Elsie—after vespers on May 31. She passed away in May 1985.

A number of traditions began under Bussey's leadership. When he first came, he continued the traditional evening worship on Sunday, but on September 13, 1964, he began calling it "Evening Vespers." That was an awkward phrase, since "vespers" is by definition an evening worship service, so in June 1968 we started calling the service simply "Vespers." The word has a technical meaning in some of the liturgically inclined churches, but we used it in the sense of a more relaxed, informal, and shorter service than would be held in the morning. This was a departure from earlier practice, when the evening service was simply a second Sunday service, much like the first. At Christmas we began the lighting of Advent candles on an Advent wreath at the morning worship. Mr. Bussey introduced us to the Lenten season, something traditional Baptists had shied away from because it was associated with the liturgical denominations. First Baptist participated with other local churches in community Lenten services. We still do. Along with Clyde Patterson, Pastor Bussey developed imaginative—and, for Southern Baptists, adventurous— Holy Week services. He held periodic church membership classes for the older children and young people of the church, not by way of direct evangelism but to help them understand the meaning, possibilities, and responsibility of church membership. In an effort to ensure that people coming forward to join the church could be visited by the pastor, we began delaying a membership vote. We would welcome the folks at the end of the service, but vote on them at a Wednesday night meeting after the pastor had talked with them. In a way, this was almost a reversion to a much earlier practice. Barbara Bussey was responsible for the Chrismon tree that now appears in the sanctuary each year. The women of the church made the Chrismons that adorn the tree. The first one went up in 1971. In 1972 Charlie Owens began a ministry of interpreting for the deaf. We never had many members in this category, and when a church for the deaf began in Wilson, this activity ceased, although Marla Whitley is always available to sign in case that service is needed.

The Bussey pastorate broke new ground in several ways. Barbara was the first pastor's wife, at least in a long time, who was not expected to be a kind of assistant pastor, teaching a ladies' Sunday School class at least. She had her hands full with three lively girls. The Busseys were the first pastor's family to purchase their own home from the beginning of their stay. A welcome change Mr. Bussey initiated was the elimination of the everymember canvass in stewardship season. People hated doing it, and didn't particularly like being called on for pledges, either. To everyone's pleasure, gifts to the church actually rose as a result. The Loyalty Dinner tradition continued, as it still does. When Mr. Bussey came to Wilson, he found that the financial condition of the church, like everything else in the county, revolved around the agricultural cycle of the tobacco crop. We would have fine offerings in the fall but be running a deficit by summer. People weren't too concerned—sometimes, it must be said, because they were pretty sure James I. Miller and Doc Thurston,² two men of wealth, would step in and make up the difference. (It has not been generally known, but C. C. Burris was one of the most generous givers in the church.) Our sense of stewardship was rather undeveloped, despite the advances made by Mr. Baucom and the Forward Program. That has changed not only because of Wilson's transformed and diversified economy but also because of Pastor Bussey's leadership.

We appear to have ordained our first female deacons in 1982. The church had tried to interest some women in serving for some time, but finally we got someone to agree, and since that time a good many women have been on the diaconate. I can find no specific mention in our records of exactly who these were, though we can infer that they were Sallie Moore and Marguerite Lee. Oddly, there is no record of their election and ordination—not in the deacons' minutes, not in the *First Baptist News*, not in the church bulletins. We had an ordination of deacons on October 3, 1982, but their names are not given in the service bulletin. At a deacons' meeting on October 11 Mr. Bussey welcomed five new deacons, but again, they aren't named. In the minutes for February 13, 1983, Marguerite Lee is present, and she is mentioned along with Sallie Moore for the meeting of October 10, 1983. Perhaps both were ordained in October 1982. I can find no record of them in meetings earlier than 1983. Someone before me tried in 2003 to compile a list of women who

^{2. &}quot;Doc" was his name. Doc Jones Thurston.

had served as deacons (twenty by that time), but this person also had trouble. Sallie Moore is conjectured as the first, her term perhaps expiring in 1984, and Marguerite Lee is listed (again with question marks) as filling the unexpired term of a deacon named "Jim." The deacons began a program for visiting members. Each deacon was assigned a certain section of the city. Later deacons would be assigned certain families to look after.

Fannie Briggs wanted to give the church a cross in memory of her parents to be placed on the communion table. This was definitely not Southern Baptist practice, so there was some hesitance, but we took the gift and began to use it. Nobody said a mumblin' word. It was accepted immediately. It does not appear every Sunday but is there more often than not, set among floral decoration, and occasionally stands there bare of any other ornamentation. It was Bussey's initiative that led to our obtaining a set of paraments for the sanctuary. These are the decorative textiles that are placed over the lectern and the pulpit as well as between the pages of the Bible. In traditional Christian liturgy, which it's fair to say most Baptists in the South know little of, certain colors are associated with certain seasons of the Christian year: purple for Lent and Advent, red for Pentecost, white for Christmas and Easter. green for most of the year. We change the paraments with the seasons, but we use the white set on communion Sundays, as well as for weddings and funerals. The white paraments we use are decorated with needlepoint done by Gracie Clark. Palm Sunday at FBC has a special connection with the Busseys that most members may not even know about. The Busseys have a beautiful backyard, and in it stands a palm tree. Each year Charles Barnes goes there, climbs a ladder, and cuts fronds for use in the Palm Sunday service.

We liked the Busseys so much that in January 1972 we gave them a new car. Maybe we were trying to make them feel obligated so they wouldn't go off and leave us. After ten years in one place, a pastor no older than Mr. Bussey might start looking.

In January 1974 Wilson, like every other locality in the country, was hit by the gasoline shortage. Long lines formed at stations whenever they had gas. On January 4 Mr. Bussey devoted his pastoral letter in the *First Baptist News* to the virtues of carpooling. In February an economic earthquake hit Wilson when the Firestone plant opened. The local economy and demographics would never be the same. In 1980 we bought a church van and laid out rules for its use. We also made a playground available out back of the church for the children. In August 1983, the first cookbook produced by the women of the church, *Quick, Say the Blessing*, appeared and quickly sold out.

In September 1983 we began the popular Wednesday night family suppers, to accompany the children's choir rehearsals, GA and RA meetings, and the weekly adult Bible study. From the very first, the weekly menu has appeared in the Sunday bulletin, and from the very first, the fellowship hall

has been filled to capacity and running over, with tables in the halls. This was a strong part of the impetus behind the expansion of the building that we began planning for in 1984. It's a mirror on the times that at these suppers ashtrays used to be all over the place. People lit up cigarettes, and the air turned blue over the course of the evening. Al Grissom, who worked for the Belk-Tyler department store, would place Belk ashtrays on the tables, and Dr. Simons's wife would sometimes come behind and replace them with "nice" ashtrays. No one would dream of lighting up in the church today. No rule was ever made about it. People just stopped smoking over the next few years and it probably got to the point that those who did want to smoke felt self-conscious about it and would wait to do it outside. The kitchen in the old fellowship hall had no dishwasher, and we often hired college students to come over and help.

Plans for an expansion of the building began in 1984, with Alec Flowers chairing the Long Range Planning Committee. In 1986 we were far enough along to hire an architect. A program we called Together We Build was kicked off in 1986, raising \$28,000 the first year, \$232,000 in 1987, and \$185,000 in 1988.

This is a convenient place to pause in the story and review the church's history of building. Not all of the decisions have been smart, but we have learned lessons. We needed to get away from the first location beside the railroad. There was nothing wrong with it at first, but no one in 1860 knew how busy a railroad was going to get in the future, or had any idea at all about our future growth. When we procured land at Nash and Pine, we actually gave some thought to simply moving the old building to the new location. Fortunately we didn't, but we built a simple structure not that much different from the old one, just bigger. At that point we had no idea about the organizational needs of the twentieth-century church; we just looked forward to building a nice edifice on the corner for worship services. We did build a nice-looking one, by contemporary standards, but it was a structural disaster from the beginning. People knew how to erect buildings that would last, but those people didn't build the structure at Pine and Nash. The roof leaked, the pews were cracked, the underpinnings rotted, and the steeple started falling apart—literally, onto the sidewalk. By the time we were forced to dismantle the steeple, we knew we were going to have to move elsewhere, and we already owned a strip of land between Park and Daniel Streets, with a wider frontage on Park. We also had a strip of land on the corner of Nash and Daniel, with a wider frontage on Daniel. This is where the Scouts' "log cabin" was located; the church no longer owns this property.

In 1947 the Silas Lucas property at Park and Nash became available, and we bought it, giving us a wide swath more than halfway up the block on Park, and about halfway down the block on Nash. Two properties, each with a house, lay between our Nash Street property and Daniel. One of our reasons

for wanting to move from Pine and Nash was to get away from the bustle of downtown. Moving three blocks down the street did not, perhaps, show a lot of foresight. About the same time we were building, First Presbyterian, which occupied a very modest little building on Nash more or less across from the public library, began putting up a proud new structure in a growing residential part of the city.

When the time came that we could build, the architect had to work with an odd-shaped piece of land on the corner of Park and Nash, stretching out toward Broad Street but actually going across the block to a narrow frontage on Daniel. He did the best he could. He designed a lovely sanctuary, traditional in outdoor appearance but enclosing what is still one of the most striking interior spaces in Wilson. But there were some faults. People coming in the front doors had no access to a restroom. They would have to walk down the side aisles to the front of the sanctuary or go outside and walk to

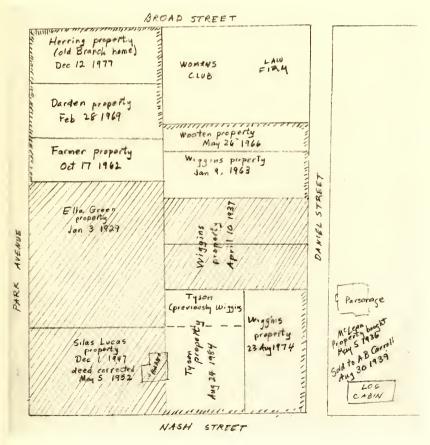


Diagram of FBC's current property, showing when each parcel was bought. Shaded area represents area owned at the time the present building was erected. (Drawing by author)

the other building. We have since corrected that, but only recently. Also, you had to go outside to get from the educational building into the sanctuary—not good if you're going to church after Sunday School in bad weather.

The educational building had design flaws as bad as the structural flaws of the old church, but the architect had to squeeze a lot of square footage for our needs onto a narrow strip of land between Park and Daniel. The entry into the old fellowship hall (the present senior adult area) was the only entrance that did not require climbing stairs, but you had to climb a few stairs to get from there anywhere else in the building. Young folks might think, So? But older folks see a problem there. The halls are narrow, which does not give our people space for socializing before and after Sunday School and on other occasions. If you stop to talk, you impede traffic. It discourages friendly conversation. Providing the space we needed required four floors, one of which was a basement.

In 1962 Mr. Bussey was glad to assume the pastorate of a church that not only wasn't facing a building program but was actually free of debt on the building it did have. But twenty years later it was becoming clear that we had to do something. A new hall for church dinners was essential. And the kitchen facilities simply had to be modernized. By this time we owned the whole city block except for the historic Woman's Club on Broad and the adjoining law office at Broad and Daniel. But we also needed something else that folks in 1952 didn't, and perhaps couldn't, foresee: parking space.

Hence the Together We Build program, conducted in the last years of the Bussey pastorate to provide funds for extensively remodeled facilities. It would be left for the Jarrard pastorate to do the actual building, and at the time, since we were not able to raise quite enough money, we had to scale back our original hopeful plans. We had to issue bonds to pay for the construction, but today we are debt-free, though still feeling the strictures of pushing ahead in 1952 with building on an odd-shaped property not large enough for needs that should have been foreseeable.

A few significant improvements to the physical plant were made during Mr. Bussey's time. In 1980 a new sound system was installed, the gift of Sallie Moore in memory of husband. In 1981 a new heating system for the whole plant was installed. In September 1982 we completed a thorough redecoration of the sanctuary, seen through by the talented Charles Barnes. (On Sunday, July 18, we had no services, because of the work in the sanctuary. We were advised that this would be a good time to visit another church.) In November a new carillon was installed, programmable but controllable from the organ console. In September 1983 we completed construction of the carport for drop-off outside the fellowship hall, making access for the elderly and infirm easier in foul weather. At the same time, an extensive reworking of the entire grounds back of the church was undertaken. Mr. Bussey's

pastorate will not be remembered for the erection of new buildings, but he did oversee tearing down seven. During his time, we demolished houses on seven pieces of property we had acquired, and by doing so we gained more than parking space: we had breathing room.

Mr. Bussey is an able and talented preacher. But he is principally remembered for his pastoral care, his shepherding of the flock. In times of family crisis, he was there to walk with folks through their grief or suffering. Mildred Grissom, his secretary for over twenty-five years, tells of the time when one of their twin daughters was diagnosed with Hodgkin's disease. She felt the world collapsing beneath her, but Mr. Bussey saw the Grissom family through it. "There are hundreds in the congregation who've had more heartache than I've had, and he's been there for us," Mildred told the *Wilson Daily Times*.³

Bill Bussey's last years in the pastorate were roiled by struggles in the denomination. When the Southern Baptist Convention was formed in 1845, it was almost like a denominational merger. There were distinct Baptist traditions in the South; Sandy Creek (Separate Baptists) and Charleston (Regular Baptists) were only two. There was a powerful Landmark tradition at work in Tennessee and Kentucky (chapter 27), and another tradition emerged in Texas, characterized by what Southern Baptist historian Leon McBeth calls "Baptist imperialism." The SBC was an engine of convenience to foster efficient efforts at ministerial education and missionary work. One result was the founding of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in 1859 in Greenville, South Carolina, a geographical area pretty much in the same tradition as eastern North Carolina. But when the school moved to Kentucky in 1877, the student body, drawn from all over the South and from the various Baptist traditions, came into contact and sometimes into conflict. In this manner squabbles began here and there in the South, as a preacher trained at Southern who had picked up, say, Separate Baptist or Landmark ideas during his education came to an area (such as eastern North Carolina) where they were foreign. Even though the SBC went through a long period of consolidation beginning in 1925 (chapter 12), these seams between old traditions never completely disappeared, and they began to come apart, often along new fractures, in 1979.

The most trying controversy in the history of the Southern Baptist Convention began in 1979 with the election of Adrian Rogers as president and the subsequent adoption of an openly announced strategy by convention fundamentalists for taking absolute control of the SBC and all its agencies.⁵

^{3.} WDT, October 24, 1987.

^{4.} Quoted in Leonard, God's Last and Only Hope, 36.

^{5.} I know that "fundamentalist" is not the politically correct term in the SBC

This was to ensure the election of a fundamentalist president of the convention each year by making sure that at the time of the election, if at no other time, the hall was filled with messengers representing fundamentalist interests. The elected president then had the authority to appoint members of a Committee on Committees. In the past a system of trust had evolved: the convention trusted the president to select people representing a wide swath of Baptist thought and interests. From now on, however, the president would appoint only dependable fundamentalists who could be counted on to see that the Committee on Nominations would be composed of those who would ensure that anyone nominated as a trustee of a convention agency would be a dependable fundamentalist vote. Thus, gradually, over a period of a few years, a fundamentalist majority would develop that could prevail over any opposition. This necessitated bringing into the process people who in the past had been only marginally, if at all, involved with SBC life. If you opposed the fundamentalist juggernaut, no amount of past loyalty to the convention mattered. For the new leadership, it was better for the agencies to be run by outsiders than by faithful Southern Baptists who did not support the fundamentalist agenda.

This is not the place to go into a discussion of the controversy. At any rate, the time has not yet come when it can be historically examined with Olympian detachment. Full disclosure: I am not a fundamentalist, and the reader should bear this in mind. As would be expected, opinion in the church was divided, though it's safe to say most were on the so-called moderate side. There were a few, however, who were quite sympathetic with the new fundamentalism, and one or two who were heavily invested in its success and dedicated to that end.

The pastor wrote in his newsletter column in January 1981, "A group is seeking to take control of the Southern Baptist agencies and institutions." During these troublesome years the church came gradually to lose interest in the Southern Baptist Convention. For all the years that the contest for president of the convention was so intense, we sent a full complement of ten messengers each year, knowing that we moderates needed all the votes we could muster. Our people would go and find that all the seats near the podium were reserved for people on the correct side. Unless you were on that side, there was no hope a microphone would be opened for you to speak. Even Marse Grant, the longtime editor of the *Biblical Recorder*, was denied a chance to speak. Busloads of people from outside, even children, were brought in to

today (J. Frank Norris had given it a bad odor), but I think it appropriate and will follow Walter B. Shurden and others and use it. Their preferred term, "conservative," pretty well describes all their opponents as well.

^{6.} FBN, January 21, 1981.



Hilton and Frances Carlton, Delma and Cliff Galloway, and Braxton Pittman at SBC (FBC)

vote in the presidential election, and then bussed right out. Women were kept out of the restrooms just for wearing a name tag from North Carolina. When it became evident that it was a hopeless cause, and when it got to the point that moderate messengers were being treated rudely at convention, we lost interest, and it is has now been a long time since we have been represented at the SBC.

In the last few years of Bussey's pastorate the tensions within the denomination began to manifest themselves now and then in our congregation, and a few people began expressing some dissatisfaction with the content of the pastor's sermons and his general approach. It was not overt, but people were meeting. Meanwhile, the church was on the verge of a building program, which would go better under the leadership of one pastor. In his sermons Mr. Bussey began occasionally to mention growing older, and he turned sixtyfive in 1986. As he thought about it, he realized it seemed to be a good time to step aside. And so it was that on July 12, 1987, he announced to a stunned congregation his retirement, to be effective at the end of January 1988. As he puts it now, he was tired. Thinking of the building program, he said at the time, "If I were 60, I'd do it. But I'm now 66 and I don't want to do it."

Bill and Barbara Bussey (Photo by author)



Over a very long career the churches at Chester, Wilson, and later at Stanhope (below) have been Bill Bussey's only pastorates, except for a student assistant pastorate at FBC in Shelbyville, Kentucky, while he was in seminary. The pastor was Charles W. Elsey, a grand old fellow who was seventy years old in 1950. He'd have young Bussey preach at night while he stayed home to listen to Jack Benny, but he expected the deacons to be at church. Now Mr. Bussey is older than that Kentucky preacher was, and he too can do what he wants to on Sunday night. He's earned the right.

The Busseys have stayed with us, members and faithful attendants at FBC, and as anyone who knows Mr. Bussey would expect, he has never made any attempt to interfere with our subsequent pastors. As an ex-pastor and member of the congregation, he has been beyond any ethical reproach. The Busseys were always an athletically inclined, active couple, as were their three daughters. Tennis players. Bill and Barbara traveled widely and kept themselves in good shape. Eventually Barbara had some orthopedic problems that put a stop to some of that activity, but these are two folks who have enjoyed their retirement as much as they have enjoyed life itself. Bill's career was devoted to making life better for a lot of people. He did that for us, and some time after retiring from FBC, he decided he'd like to try pastoring a small country church for a while. So he accepted a call as half-time pastor of the Baptist church at Stanhope, in Nash County. He served them eighteen years, then took a couple of years off; then he went right back, and he is still there, twice a month. As for us at FBC, we had been well-pastored for over twenty-five years by a man of charm, faith, integrity, and intelligence.

Chapter 25

It's Good to Be the Church

1989–1994 (James L. Jarrard)

By the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain.

-1 CORINTHIANS 15:10 RSV

Then the congregation gathered for worship at eleven o'clock on Sunday morning, January 31, 1988, something most unusual happened. Our interim pastor was Dr. T. L. Cashwell, now retired from Hayes Barton Baptist Church in Raleigh, where he had been pastor for over twenty years. Dr. Cashwell emerged onto the rostrum wearing a robe. No pastor at FBC had ever worn a robe in the pulpit, but the interesting thing was—a lot of people didn't even notice. An interim minister has a special function. Borrowing baseball terminology from Jim Jarrard (as you will see later), he is not a substitute, just filling in until somebody else comes along. He is a pinch hitter, selected and brought in at a particular time for a particular purpose. He serves as the insulation between pastors. A transition is coming that may not be easy, especially after a long term held by a well-loved pastor, and the interim's job is to discover what the troubles are apt to be and begin a process of adjustment. The robe matter was just a little thing. Dr. Cashwell was used to wearing a robe, and knowing that our next pastor might choose to do so, he tried to absorb any shock that might come from it, though in the case of the robe there wasn't much. Now if he had worn a stole, it might have been different.

The search for a new pastor began, of course, soon after Mr. Bussey an-

nounced his retirement in July 1987. It had been a long time since we had needed one, so the deacons had to bone up on how to do it. They decided on a search committee of six and asked members of the congregation to submit names of people whom they would like to have serve. Between fifty and seventy names were submitted, and from these a deacon committee selected a carefully balanced group of eight people who had a good deal of support in the congregation, who represented different interests in the congregation (male and female, young and old, conservative and moderate), and, importantly, who the deacons thought could get along together, discussing disagreements without heat. The committee was presented to the church and a vote scheduled for Sunday, September 13, 1987.

In advance of the date, Chuck Whitley, chairman of the diaconate, became aware that there would be a problem at the meeting. Of the church members who were sympathetic with the fundamentalist takeover of the SBC then in progress, the most vocal, Dr. Cecil Rhodes, was not on the committee and was concerned that given the composition of the committee it was not apt to select a "Bible-believing pastor." Those are his words. Before the crucial vote a meeting was held at the Rhodes home with some eight or so of our members and a visiting pastor from a fundamentalist church in Raleigh. This man told the group that if they wanted to have real conservative Bible-preaching leadership, they simply had to get another member on the committee, one of their persuasion. The strategy developed was to put forward an amendment to the motion to accept the search committee, placing nine people on the committee, to be voted on by the congregation from a slate consisting of the eight original nominees plus any other(s) that members might add. The meeting was supposed to be secret, but someone let the word out. Dr. Rhodes is guite frank about all this, and still doesn't know who let the plan be known.

Expecting a difficult situation, Whitley asked Louis Meyer, an associate justice on the N.C. Supreme Court and faithful FBC member, to stand beside him as parliamentarian. The church was almost full. Everyone knew a crucial vote was coming. When the motion was made to accept the deacons' slate, Dr. Rhodes then stood to make his substitute motion—that nominations from the floor be accepted at that time, and that a written ballot with those names plus the deacons' suggestions be voted on the next Sunday. An amendment was made to this motion by way of clarification. After an intense discussion, a standing vote was taken, with counters passing through the congregation. The amendment passed, though narrowly. After that vote, there was a prolonged and emotional discussion on Dr. Rhodes's now amended motion, with several people expressing their thoughts or asking for clarification. The question was called for, and the substitute motion as amended was rejected. Again there was a standing vote, with counters passing through the congre-

gation. The motion failed by one vote. Dr. Rhodes says this was because many of his people thought the matter was settled after the first vote and had left to go to the restaurants. But the main motion, to accept the recommendation of the deacons, was still to be voted on, and it passed overwhelmingly.¹

A dramatic, climactic moment in the church's history had passed, and much to the credit of the losing side, there was no subsequent rancor or determination to pursue a fight. The parliamentary defeat was taken with good grace by Dr. Rhodes and all the others. What could have been a nasty episode even culminating in a split in the church was avoided. Dr. Rhodes and his followers must be given due credit for this.

This should be seen in a wider context. In 1987 the new leadership in the SBC had succeeded in claiming more than 50 percent of the trustees of Southeastern Baptist Seminary in Wake Forest. Southeastern, rightly or wrongly, had a reputation for being the most liberal of the six convention seminaries—although this does not mean it was liberal, just more so than others.² This made it an obvious first target. Cecil Rhodes was one of the trustees named to begin a term in 1987. At the fall meeting of the trustees, Dr. Rhodes spoke frequently, and, indeed, it was he who put forward the crucial motion that had the effect of quenching any hope the Southeastern faculty had of surviving the onslaught.³ It passed sixteen to fourteen, but it might as well have been one hundred to zero. At their November 16 meeting, our deacons at FBC passed a motion to send a letter to the Southeastern faculty expressing support. There was discussion, meaning that there was probably some opposition, but FBC had gone on record. The pot was simmering, and the new pastor would have work to do.

The search committee soon got down to work. (Full disclosure: I was on the committee.) John Webb, another associate justice of the N.C. Supreme Court, an astute gentleman who was also a stalwart FBC member, was made the chair. The committee functioned well, as intended. No big personal problems arose, and the differing interests that the members were intended to represent were indeed represented. Once the vacancy was made known, the committee received many applications. The committee culled them and selected a few to investigate. They brought in an attractive candidate from Ken-

^{1.} The parliamentary situation was a bit more complicated even than this account, which I am digesting from the minutes of the meeting taken by the church clerk, Frances Carlton. Enough time has passed that personal memories of the event conflict.

^{2.} A revered figure among Kentucky Baptists, J. Franklin Owen of blessed memory, who was my pastor during the year that I spent at the University of Kentucky, once said during this controversy: "I am a liberal Southern Baptist, and that makes me conservative enough for anyone!"

^{3.} Full disclosure: it was an open meeting and I was present.

tucky. The committee itself traveled to visit some churches closer to home, unnerving the congregations—it's hard for a search committee to visit a church without being obvious. The group spied out one church and later found out the congregation had immediately started showering the pastor with gifts, favors, and other expressions of appreciation.

The search took about a year. At the committee's recommendation, the church invited Dr. James L. Jarrard, pastor of Immanuel Baptist Church in Greensboro, to preach for us on October 16, 1988, after which there would be a vote on issuing him a call. There was a unanimous vote to invite him to be our pastor, and he accepted.

Jarrard, son of a steelworker, was born in Birmingham on December 16, 1947. He attended Stetson University in Florida and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, where he went on to earn a DMin degree. He was in seminary during the troubled times the country passed through in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and his life there reflected some of the tenor of the times. Jim played guitar and banjo reasonably well and was a right decent singer. He earned part of his way through seminary performing in Louisville nightspots, not traditionally hangouts for seminarians. He served as pastor of a series of churches, staying about four years in each: West Hampton Baptist Church in Virginia, Union Grove Baptist in Kernersville, and Immanuel in Greensboro. Immanuel was a most unusual Southern Baptist church for 1988: it was multiracial. There were not only white and black members, but also some Asians and American Indians. It was not a white congregation with a few members of other ethnicities. There were a good many nonwhite members; some had leadership positions, and in some cases these leaders were people of little education but deep spirituality. Pastor Jarrard had designed the impressive stained glass windows in the church, depicting the four seasons, "Four Seasons" being the name of that particular area of Greensboro.

Jim and Nikki Jarrard, with sons Martin and Justin, arrived in early January 1989. Mrs. Jarrard was the first pastor's wife at FBC to work outside the home. She taught at Greenfield Academy and later moved into social work with Hospice out of Wilson Memorial Hospital. She has since earned a MSW degree from East Carolina and now does triage on mental patients at the Wilmed emergency room and is a therapist at the Free Will Baptist Children's Home in Middlesex. Teaches some at Barton College, too. Dr. Jarrard conducted his first service on January 15; the sermon title was "Fulfilment and New Wine." He wrote his first letter for *First Baptist News* in the January 18 issue, ending it as he would all his letters: "It's good to be the church."

One of the first orders of business that was obvious to the deacons was the writing of a constitution. Actually, we had one, but it was so old no one knew anything about it. It was adopted July 5, 1879, and would not have been particularly relevant anyway. With the turmoil in the denomination spilling over

into the church, it was clear that we needed to set down some clear guidance for ourselves that would help ease our way through any future problems. A committee was appointed in February to do this. Judge Louis Meyer was chair, along with Kathryn Easom, Clyde Patterson, Bruce Jackson, Cyndi Bachara, and Hilton Carlton.

As it turned out, Dr. Rhodes and some others who had strong feelings about the church's apparent refusal to accept the new SBC direction eventually drifted away. There was no church split, no mass exodus in a huff. It happened there was a new church in town, formed off a split in the Five Points Baptist Church, a purely internal matter that had nothing to do with the convention issue. Some of our folks joined them, and this congregation was organized as the Raleigh Road Baptist Church in May 1989.

In April we began a monthly series on Wednesday nights called "First Forum," in which well-known speakers came to talk about their areas of knowledge. Most of these had something to do with the denominational question. Among them were Randall Lolley, ex-president of Southeastern, and state convention figures such as Leon Smith, Bob Mullinax, and Joe Jones, who would later move to Wilson to teach at Barton and be a member and deacon at FBC. In the summer of 1989 we had a series of Sunday night sessions called "Meet Southern Baptists," tracing our history. Toward the end of 1989 we got a sad letter from Burdette Robinson announcing his resignation to take up a position at Gardner-Webb. More about Burdette in chapter 27. By the end of the year we were getting used to Pastor Jarrard's paragraphs in

the *First Baptist News*. They were pastoral letters in the classic manner such as Paul wrote, if perhaps with not quite the same claim to inspiration.

On the Together We Build front, the church voted May 20, 1990, to proceed with the extensive building and renovation program we had plans for, provided only that we could budget for the next year adequate funds for both normal expenses and debt retirement, or \$500,000. We set a cap on the project itself of \$1,100,000. This year we increased the distance between ourselves and the SBC. The pastor warned in May that "things are happening at the convention that are detrimental to our spiritual health." At the June session of the SBC, moderate candidate



James Jarrard (Wilson Times)

for president Daniel Vestal lost, as expected, and any hopes moderates had of restoring the old partnership of trust that had been the Southern Baptist Convention were gone. An informal invitation went out for interested moderates to attend a meeting in Atlanta in August. Over three thousand showed up, among them Dr. Jarrard.

Major changes were made in our distribution of funds to Baptist causes. Traditionally 64.5 percent of money sent to the SBC Cooperative Program went to state work. We voted to retain this, sending the amount directly to the N.C. Baptist State Convention. As for the other 35.5 percent, we accepted a recommendation from the Denominational Relations Committee, chaired by Dan Shingleton (who had never left us since his student days but was now all grown up), that 25 percent go to the SBC as usual; 40 percent directly to the Foreign Mission Board; 25 percent directly to the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs; and 10 percent to the Missions Counseling Service of the Department of Pastoral Care at the North Carolina Baptist Hospital in Winston-Salem. Our donation to the SBC was made warily. We were not sure we wanted to continue this at all, but we would stay with it for a while longer. The direct contribution to the Baptist Joint Committee was to help make up for the SBC's no longer funding it, since the new leadership was opposed to the traditional Baptist stance on church-state relations and did not want its money to go to an agency supporting the cause—which was what the BIC was about. The committee also recommended that the funds be channeled through the new entity formed in Atlanta in August. That came to be known as the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship (CBF). It has endured and prospered and is today the main channel of our giving program apart from local causes. The church in conference had to approve this plan, and it did so overwhelmingly. It was a vote of "no confidence" in the SBC.

In July 1990, C. Lynwood Walters (a.k.a. "Mr. Ed") joined the staff as associate minister. We'll meet him too in chapter 27.

On October 7, 1990, we began an early Sunday morning worship service. It started at eight thirty and was designed to allow worship in a more relaxed atmosphere and to provide opportunities for experimental, creative ways of worship. It became customary for us to begin these service singing the hymn "Morning Has Broken," and we did so as long as Jim Jarrard was with us. The vespers services continued on Sunday night, so Dr. Jarrard was committing himself to preparing an extra message each week, since he did not preach the same sermon at the early service as at the eleven o'clock service. Consequently, a good number of people added another hour of church to their Sunday schedules and came to both. We still have this service, though at nine o'clock. It still pretty much meets its original purpose of providing a less formal worship experience, and it is well-attended. Pastor Murray preaches the same sermon at both services, since by the time of his coming it was pretty clear that almost everyone attended only one of the two services. An unfor-

tunate unintended consequence has been that many of those who regularly attend the same one tend to lose touch with members who regularly attend the other.

Sunday, December 2, brought a new touch to our Christmas activities, with a Hanging of the Greens service at five o'clock. At this time the advent wreath would be brought in and the Chrismon tree set shining. This, too, is still on our annual agenda.

On January 16, 1991, Operation Desert Storm began in Iraq. We began opening the doors of the sanctuary during the day from eight thirty to five o'clock for folks to come in and pray for wisdom for our leaders, safety for our troops, and peace. Several of our church families had sons (Jack Tew, Gerald Simpson, Mark Cleve) or other close relatives in the war. On a happier note, the Sunday School Board of the SBC released its long-awaited revision of the *Baptist Hymnal*, and we promptly ordered copies to replace the well-worn 1957 edition we bought early during Mr. Bussey's pastorate. We also took the opportunity to replace our RSV pew Bibles with editions of the NRSV, first published in 1989. In April we were honored to have Dr. Bill Leonard, prominent Baptist historian, with us for a weekend of sessions with the theme "Where Is American Religion Heading?"

Sally Boswell retired from her dual position of financial secretary/hostess in June 1991. That deserves a grateful paragraph of its own.

In June construction work began on the new facilities. Douglas "Rusty" Tabb, Jr., and Charles "Chuck" Whitley were tireless co-chairs of the building committee, seeing the project through, brick by brick. The staff and visitors during the week were in for a long haul of noise and inconvenience, but as the pastor put it, it was progress, and he wrote, "It's good to be the church." There was a little dust-up in August when someone wrote a letter to the *Wilson Daily Times* (August 22) complaining that the people of FBC ought to be spending their money helping people out rather than building bigger facilities for their own use. Dr. Jarrard, writing for the church staff, published a response in the *WDT* on August 27. It's quoted in part here, not to revisit the spat but because the letter is such a good statement of the breadth of FBC's widening ministries.

It was with great sadness that we, the ministerial staff of First Baptist Church, read the letter to the editor on Aug. 22. Those who know First Baptist Church and its ministries know of its budgetary commitment (and in many cases active participa-

^{4.} This used to be regular practice until someone stole a pulpit Bible given to the church by Gracie Clark. At that point, during Mr. Bussey's pastorate, we began locking the doors.

tion in) Meals on Wheels, Flynn Home, Wesley Home, Hospice, Hope Station, and a weekly mission to Spanish-speaking people.

As stewards of our outmoded and undersized facilities, we have been a "revolving door" to the community in hosting meetings (sometimes involving food) to mental health, Hospice, Alcoholics Anonymous, Red Cross, Barton School of Nursing, Al-Anon, scout groups, senior adults, literacy training and a host of others. . . .

We have attempted to take hunger ministry seriously, both locally and globally. We have taken an active leadership role in the local CROP Walk for Hunger, given to our own denominational hunger causes which have o percent overhead, provided individual counseling for those needing assistance, and are directly involved in the Hope Station ministry. . . . As is also true of other churches, our people have been creative in discovering ways to minister to people in their spiritual, economic and emotional needs, and many of them are widely known.

A church does need a place to congregate and our new building program took approximately seven years of hard study and decision. . . . We invite [the writer] and others to join us in the common calling and vision of our Lord to provide "more than crumbs" to those needing the necessities of life.

The "Big Wednesday," our first fellowship supper in the new fellowship hall, was September 16, 1992. It felt especially good to be the church—this church—that night, though we waited until October 11 for a formal dedication. In March 1993 we put the new hall to a use that would have shocked our forbears: we had a square dance! On October 2, 1993, we ordained our youth minister, Raygina Beale, newly graduated from Duke Divinity School, to the gospel ministry. We had ordained a number of women to the diaconate, but Ray was the first to have our blessing on her ministry. On November 14 we ordained the new pastor of our mission, Cipriano Moreno Velásquez.

The burden of Jarrard's ministry has to be seen through the lens of the times, of his formative years and first forays into ministry. The civil rights and desegregation issues were burning hot in those years, and no honest person, liberal or conservative, black or white, could escape them. Something of Jarrard's own background comes through in an autobiographical novel he wrote, *Birmingham Born*, which anyone seeking to understand the man needs to read. When Jim was pastoring in Kernersville and Greensboro, W. R. Grigg, a Home Mission Board appointee to work with National Baptists,⁵

^{5.} The several Baptist organizations bearing in one form or another the words "National Baptist Convention" are African American conventions.

became a mentor of his and a model for one of the characters in the novel. Largely through Grigg's influence, Jarrard became one of three white ministers in a professional association of black ministers. One of these was once scheduled to speak at a meeting, but he didn't show up. Jim quietly let the moderator know that he was willing to step in if needed. He was asked, and he spoke. After the speech, the moderator, a former baseball player, had words like these: "I know the difference between a substitute and a pinch hitter. A substitute is someone who comes along and fills in until the right person appears. A pinch hitter is someone you bring in for strategic purposes at just the right time to do a specific job. Today we have heard a pinch hitter!" Jim takes this as one of the highest compliments ever paid him.

A glimpse into the wider scope of his Wilson ministry can be seen in a story he tells of a certain homeless man, a story some readers will remember. I have asked Jim to tell this in his own words:

I remember a white man who became kind of a fixture at my office. He'd stop by on his own schedule from time to time, would ask for specific things—a night at a motel on a cold winter evening, some food, some help. I'd take him to the [Mental Health] Center or the shelter or the bus station. He raked leaves for me a couple of times, once for money, once just to "pay me back" for things I'd done. He showered a few times at my house, and I know a couple of the ladies at church were frightened of him when they found him sleeping in the stoop that led to the downstairs in the back of the church. I bought him a bus ticket or two, and he'd just come in and chat some. He slept in the woods, and I'd go find him on cold nights sometime and give him blankets and coffee. He wasn't the only one that I did that with, but he was the one who came to church the most. He had a peculiar wisdom sometimes, and a desire to survive. Don't know if I helped him in the long run, but it wasn't for lack of seeking options for him anyway.6

Dr. Jarrard published a good bit: book reviews, Sunday School lesson commentaries, sermons, and articles for national publications for clergy like *Christian Ministry*. He read papers or preached at important meetings, such as the Conference on Inerrancy held at WFU in 1980. He wrote a guest editorial against the state lottery for the *Greensboro News and Record* in 1987. Of the groups that were splintering off from the Southern Baptist Convention, Jarrard was most active in the local effort known as North Carolina Friends of Mission. They put out a newsletter, and Jim thinks some of his

^{6.} E-mail to the author, May 27, 2009.

best pieces of writing were some satirical works he wrote anonymously for that publication.

Dr. Jarrard introduced the practice of having a ceremony at the ordination of new deacons in which each deacon was presented with a white towel, with their name embroidered on it. The towel is a symbol of servanthood, such as a waiter might wear over his arm, or a person might use in washing the feet of another.

Jim Jarrard will probably be best remembered at FBC for his preaching and he wore a robe in the pulpit. Dr. Cashwell had prepared the way here, so that any criticism of that was already spent. Jarrard was a master wordsmith, as FBC member Norma Lewis once put it. His sermons were well thought through; in fact, they were written out (since copies were later made available), but he had such control over the material that he seldom had to take his eyes off the audience to consult notes. The material he presented was textured like the plot of a novel. When the sermon was over, you realized he had not told you what you were supposed to believe and accept. He was leaving you with questions to deal with in your way and fashion your own answers from. He could deal with the most sensitive of issues—civil rights, war and peace, women's issues—without making them the topic of the sermon. He led you to read between the lines, sometimes almost daring you to follow him. Sometimes there was a punch line at the very end that was a key to the whole. His rough count was that while in Wilson he preached some 290 sermons at the eleven o'clock service, about two hundred sermons at the early service, and about five hundred messages for Wednesday night vespers or Bible studies. If there was a major theme running through and informing all those messages, it would be the grace of God. I have tried to keep my opinions, if not hidden, at least in the background throughout this book, but I would not be completely honest if I didn't say here that Jim Jarrard is the best preacher I have ever heard, consistently on a week-after-week basis. He was also a fine teacher. I must also confess here that I was, by trade, a biblical scholar and professor, and I never heard Dr. Jarrard teach a biblical lesson without learning something, either of content or about how to present material to a class.

While here, our pastor spent a lot of his time on the building program. As he puts it, if you are pastor while a building is going up, you don't have time for much else. He knew; he had experience with this in previous pastorates. He also admits that he spent a lot of time with denominational politics. The same thing could be said, however, of just about every other pastor in a Southern Baptist church during those years. Some of the leaders on both sides of the struggle apparently did little else. Pastor Jarrard's major contribution was that he led FBC during the most tumultuous years the denomination ever faced, and led us through with our ideals intact: if not quite, quite

prepared to sever formal ties with the SBC, at least looking forward to a bright future as the CBF took up the genius of the pre-1979 SBC and found exciting, proud new ways to be Baptists, new ways in which it was good to be the church.

On Monday, March 22, 1994, a couple of deacons dropped by to talk with Dr. Jarrard. Together they came to the conclusion that both the church and the pastor had reached a point in their lives when changes needed to be made, and Dr. Jarrard promised them his resignation. One of the visitors, Hilton Carlton, looking forward a few weeks, told him specifically, however, "We want to hear your Easter sermon."

So Dr. Jarrard wrote the next day: "I come to a time of transition for me and my family, and I find it needful, with Paul in a winter season of his own ministry, to take some time to 'make tents' and regain a focus and strength for ministry and life. I trust you will continue to pray for us and remember us for all the opportunities to do God's work we have shared together. God bless you each and all." This is part of a longer letter presented to the deacons that day. Jim quotes from the letter at greater length in his last column in the *First Baptist News*, the Easter issue of March 31. In the letter he reviews what he sees as accomplishments and what he admits as weaknesses. After the quoted letter he closes with a few words directly to us, the membership: "My prayer is that First Baptist Church will continue to be the strong, open, free church it has been and does so well. You are a great people. Today, as always, it's good to be the church."

Like T. W. Chambliss before him, Jim Jarrard went on to find fulfillment plying a ministry in the secular world. Chambliss did it through journalism; Jarrard has done it in state government. He is now with the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services as section chief of Resource and Regulatory Management, Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Substance Abuse Services. That's a long description, but briefly, he makes life better for the most deprived and neediest of the state's citizens, and that pleases him. People like the old fellow in Wilson he helped who lived on the edge of the woods.

^{7.} A description of the division and its work, and Jarrard's place in it, can be found at www.ncdhhs.gov/mhddsas/divisioninfo.htm.

Chapter 26

The Living of These Days

1995 – (Douglas E. Murray)

The lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage.

-PSALM 16:6 RSV

Well, it was time for another pinch hitter. This time it was Dr. Colon S. Jackson, Jr., native of Perquimans County. After serving a two-year stint in the U.S. Air Force after high school, he attended WFU and Southeastern and pastored several churches in the state. When the Vietnam War was at its deepest, in 1968, he volunteered for service in the Navy Chaplain Corps, served twenty-two years, and retired with rank of captain. Since that time he had been doing interim pastorates around both the Carolinas. He came our way July 17, 1994, and stayed with us until March 19, 1995. There was some trouble around then; Doris, Colon's wife, was having a recurrence of cancer, which tied them pretty closely to Baptist Hospital in Winston-Salem. She passed away there April 14, 1997. Dr. Jackson later married Johnnie Faye Campbell, one of our members. At this time they are both thriving, dividing their time between Lillington and Atlantic Beach.

During the Jackson interim, a search committee was at work again. (Full disclosure: I was on it.) It found the man we wanted in Elizabeth City. Doug Murray's first day with us would be Easter Sunday, April 16, but Colon Jackson's last day was March 19. This meant that the only ministerial leadership we had for three weeks was Clyde Patterson and Ray Beale, our youth minister. At the service that morning we had a special recognition for Jackson,

for Clyde and Ray, and for the support staff as well. But it was left to Garland Ricks, chair of the diaconate at the time, to hold things together for a while. One Sunday even I tried to act the part of a preacher; the second Sunday the young people gave a series of short talks; and Ray preached on the third, what turned out to be her last Sunday with us.

Douglas Murray was born in Raleigh on January 4, 1955. The family was living in Smithfield at the time but later moved to Cary, where he attended high school. After that, on to WFU as a biology major. On graduating, he did a summer's work for the Home Mission Board in Alaska, where he learned how cold glacier-fed rivers are. He was canoeing down a river with some others when it overturned in rapids. He would have drowned had it not been for a life jacket. They bounced down the icy river awhile until the stream calmed down and they could stand up. They got onto some rocks that were warm from the sun and held onto them. I don't suppose one would forget an experience like that. Doug went on to Southeastern after that, and then began his career. He was associate pastor at Woodbrook Baptist Church in Baltimore from August 1981 to January 1987. Daughter Whitney was born in Baltimore. Graduate work at Southeastern then, and to the pastorate of FBC Lewiston-Woodville in Bertie County for a couple of years, August 1987 to August 1989. Next stop was FBC in Elizabeth City, from August 1989 until he left for Wilson in April 1995.

What attracted him here? He saw a church community with worthy spiri-



Doug, Candy, and Whitney Murray in Elizabeth City (Murray family)

tual resources in a neighborhood of need. He knew our congregation had recently been through a period of unpleasantness, and he had some experience taking over after such a situation and thought he could be of use. Also, he knew Lynwood Walters, and Lynwood put in a good word for us. He told people he trusted Lynwood and he trusted God.

The new pastor's first quandary was a minor matter but seemed insoluble. The robe: to wear or not to wear? Some people really wanted him to, some really wanted him not to, and most folks didn't care. Murray's solution was to wear a robe on communion Sundays and maybe other special occasions, but not otherwise. It works.

No sooner had Doug arrived than he was hit with three resignations on the staff. Ray Beale was first (chapter 27), followed by Cipriano Velásquez, pastor of the Hispanic mission, and by the church secretary, Sherry Pearce. As it happened, we had a student intern as assistant youth minister at the time, Kelly Ham. She stepped in as interim youth minister. We had to wait to fill the other positions. Staff turnover would prove to be a recurrent minor problem during Murray's pastorate—at least as of this writing.

Murray has broadened the scope of the Sunday night and Wednesday night exercises beyond that of Bible study. He has devoted special series to interests of his. He keeps up with biblical archaeology and has from time to time kept us informed about what's going on. He has a special interest in marriage relationships. He's attended a number of training sessions on the subject and has held a number of marriage enrichment workshops here for our own members. Another concern is spirituality, which he has tried to further among our number by workshops and special prayer sessions. A number of prayer and study groups have arisen spontaneously without any particular impetus from the pastor, which is an encouraging sign. He has emphasized the pastoral aspects of the deacons' responsibilities and set up occasional deacons' retreats, once over a weekend on Emerald Isle. Once Fr. Samuel Weber, a Benedictine who teaches part-time at WFU, came for a one-day prayer retreat held on the campus at Barton.

The Murray pastorate has been punctuated by two horrendous hurricanes. On Friday night, September 5, 1996, powerful Hurricane Fran hit Wilson, doing more damage—by far—than any since Hazel in 1954. A wedding was set for Saturday, which we will hear about later, which took place despite all the trees down in the area and the church being without electricity for a few days—"though not without power." ("Trite," says Doug Murray, "but couldn't resist.") Many Wilsonians were without power for two weeks or more.

Three years later came Hurricane Floyd, something not likely to be forgotten by anyone who lived through it. It made landfall around Cape Fear Thursday, September 16. By the time it left North Carolina to work its will northward, much of eastern North Carolina was under water. Fran had

brought damaging winds. Floyd brought flood. The ground was already saturated from Hurricane Dennis, which had come through only a couple of weeks earlier, so the heavy rainfall could not be absorbed and could only rise before making its way into the sounds. Wilson County and the city itself suffered considerable damage, but other counties to the east of us were hit even harder. FBC in Wilson became the staging area for two major rescue efforts: those of Baptist Men and the Red Cross. Baptist Men southwide had long had trained disaster teams located around the country, ready to take off quickly in case of need. This was such a case, and Baptist Men teams came into eastern North Carolina from all over. (Referring to the action as by "Baptist Men" is a bit misleading, for an awful lot of women are also involved in those efforts.)

The morning after the storm Murray received a call from someone with Baptist Men in Raleigh, asking what conditions were. Doug said he thought we had come through okay, but the man on the other end of the line allowed as how he had heard otherwise. So Doug got out and tried to drive around and found out he was wrong. He got back in touch with Raleigh, and their man there informed him that Baptist Men from Kentucky had a contingent on the way up from Atlanta. They had gone there thinking the storm was going to hit farther south. He asked Doug to be out on I-95 somewhere to direct the caravan into Wilson. So Doug went out to the interchange with NC 42 and waited, expecting ten or so vans to come rolling up. But it was more like thirty vehicles, with over one hundred people, a veritable corps of engineers. Doug led the group into Wilson to FBC, where the Red Cross had already set up with their huge supply trucks and volunteers come in from as far away as Alaska.

Part of the Red Cross effort was directed at delivering the meals provided by the Baptists, who set up cooking facilities in the driveway outside our



Red Cross and Baptist Men relief efforts during Hurricane Floyd (Photo by author)

kitchen. Other Baptists would go out to flooded homes, which were not hard to find, and help the residents in the sad labor of cleaning up after the ruin. Small mountains of drywall, lathing, other building materials, and personal possessions were soon in front yards in stricken areas of the city and, indeed, all over the area. In addition to the assistance they gave the residents in doing the actual work, their presence and witness was a much-needed source of encouragement. They were well trained for their work, as were the Red Cross volunteers. Linda Wheeler in our kitchen did more than her part, but our kitchen's output was dwarfed by the massive efforts going on just outside the building as the Kentucky crew prepared meals—not just for the stricken, but also for those who had come to help. During the six weeks or so this was going on, several hundred thousand meals were prepared at FBC. The church was a mess. The parking lot was full of heavy trucks and equipment, the fellowship hall was stacked high with cartons of supplies and lined with cots, and weary volunteers were on cots and in sleeping bags all over the building. The church has never looked finer.

In the summer of 2003 we gave the pastor the privilege of a three-month sabbatical. He and Candy attended a Marriage Enrichment Conference in Austin, Texas; spent three weeks of prayer, study, and spiritual direction at Pendle Hill Quaker Retreat Center in Pennsylvania; and participated in the two-week Oxford Summer School in Religious Studies in England. While our pastor was away, Gaylord Lehman, retired pastor of Lakeside Baptist in Rocky Mount, filled in for him. Lehman has spoken at the church quite often, and everyone appreciated his capable service for the duration. He later put in valuable time with Wilson's First Presbyterian. Researchers fifty years from now should not overlook this man.

When Doug returned to FBC, he was delighted to find that phase 1 of a long-range building renovation and improvement program was pretty much completed. There was a lot of stuff around the place that just needed to be



Doug Murray (Photo by author)

fixed. The new church we were so proud of in 1952 was now over fifty years old, and time had done its slow work. In the educational building the children's space had been remodeled, and a lot of painting had been done. Russell Stephenson had overseen a remodeling of the pastor's office. The sanctuary had been repainted, and new carpeting had been installed there as well as in the educational building. Repairs were about to be made to the roof and steeple, and out front the columns were replaced. Now it can be revealed: for many years, unknown to most members, three darts were stuck into one of the columns, near the top—darts like you'd throw at a dartboard. A passerby noticed them one day years ago. No one knows when they got there, but someone made a real effort to get them so well stuck in, so high up.

Phase 2 of the plan was executed a few years later, when one of the major architectural faults of the church was corrected. An addition was made to one side of the narthex: it contains restrooms, and it's also a handy place for bridal parties to gather at weddings. During this phase the entire third floor of the education building was gutted, redesigned, and remodeled and became the center for youth activities. The small dining room was upgraded, and the church parlor became an inviting church library without losing its function as a venue for social occasions and the meeting place of a Sunday School class. Another element incorporated into phase 2 was the construction of a columbarium, about which more later. Phase 3 will involve some additional construction to the present building, adding space that's more usable, safer, more sociable and inviting. This space will include an elevator. This is a matter of some urgency: from 1952 until now, except for the senior adults area, there has been no way of getting into the educational building without climbing stairs. But to get out of the senior adults area to anywhere else, you still have to climb a short flight. A few years ago one of our seniors was going up those stairs, fell, broke something, and was taken to a hospital, where she died as a result of the fall. As of this writing, phase 3 has been put on hold because of the current recession.

During Murray's pastorate, the question of our relation to the SBC and CBF arose again and was handled by the Denominational Relations Committee, chaired by Joe Jones. Once again the committee shied away from making a final break with the SBC, even though our present connections are slim. We lost some good members over this. The matter didn't go away, and it arose later when Cliff Galloway chaired the committee, but again the committee came to the same hesitant conclusion. Some problems Doug Murray has faced in his years with us have been conflicts arising over personalities. Disagreements have developed among staff members and have had to be worked through. The Wednesday night suppers have presented challenges as increasing numbers of neighborhood children have begun attending. We'll look at this in chapter 33.

Tuesday, September 11, 2001, was the day when four airliners were hijacked with the aim of flying them into important and symbolic buildings in New York and the DC area. Three succeeded, and everyone aboard all four was lost. We held prayer meetings on Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday, and Sunday nights. The church was packed on Sunday morning.

When Dr. Murray arrived at FBC in 1995, he was aware that he was pastor of an aging congregation. This would present two challenges. First, an aging population requires a considerable amount of time in pastoral care. Giving the elderly the attention they need necessarily contracts the time available for the second need: bringing new people into the church. The congregation on Sundays is smaller today than it was when Murray came, but it is younger, and that holds promise. If you were to look at the statistics on membership in the associational records, you would think we had a terrific church split in 1999. Our membership figures, which for years had been up around 1,600, suddenly dropped down to 874. This was simply due to a careful purging of the roll, removing the names of people who had just vanished, or otherwise shown no interest, people we did not know and not heard of in years. Sometimes in the process we discovered people on the rolls who had never even joined the church but whose names wound up on the rolls for something as small as visiting a Sunday School class. Since then we've been more meticulous with record-keeping. Resident membership now stands at 771, with Sunday School attendance below 250. In the next chapters we'll be looking at how church activities have been conducted, how they have ebbed and flowed over the decades and developed into the sprawling ministries of today's FBC. Dr. Murray enjoys sailing, so it would be fitting to say that as of this writing, the crew is stable, the weather is fair, and a gentle but brisk breeze is moving us forward. Things look good for the living of these days.

Chapter 27

The Keeping of the Ordinances

Keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you.

-1 CORINTHIANS 11:2 KIV

IN THE NOVEMBER 13, 1889, issue of the *Wilson Mirror* there appeared a description of the baptism of a woman and her niece at Wilson Baptist Church. It is said to have taken place the previous Tuesday night, which would have been either November 12 or, more likely, November 5. Unfortunately, there is no record of this ceremony in our church book, and no way of knowing who the candidates were. The description of the baptism, however, is worth repeating in whole for the insight it gives into what such a ceremony was like in 1889. Mr. Read was pastor at the time.

At the Baptist Church last Tuesday evening after the regular meeting service, a most solemnly impressive and beautiful scene was presented. The open pool, the wall behind tastefully festooned with white muslin, a pyramid of variegated chrysanthemums, and diagonally across the desk a magnificent cross made of most beautiful flowers, the minister standing breast high in the water, receiving from her [the aunt's] beautiful niece of eighteen the tottering form of the aunt of seventy years as she steps into the water to be buried in the likeness of her Master. Following her into the watery grave was a radiant maiden in the first flush of beauteous womanhood, and then as the words, "'tis done as thou hast commanded" are uttered, the organ and hundreds of voices swell the glad anthem of rejoicing.

It was customary in the old days to hold baptisms at times other than worship services. At first, of course, we had to make an outing to Toisnot or some other lake or river. Our first indoor baptistry was installed in 1873, but at this distance it isn't clear how we got water into it before there was a municipal waterworks. Maybe the sexton toted the water in buckets from a well. Maybe it was done with a water wagon pulled by horses or mules. Valentine records that by the 1890s Wilson used a Studebaker water wagon to settle the dust in dry weather. Perhaps it, or a similar model, was being used as early as 1873.¹

Indoor baptisms must have been pretty chilly in cold weather before heated water was available. Baptisms were still held at times other than Sunday, usually on Tuesday or Wednesday nights, whenever we were holding prayer meetings or business meetings at the times. For some decades now we've pretty well confined baptisms to Sundays, almost always on Sunday mornings before the choir's anthem. This gives the pastor time to get out of his robe and waders, into his jacket, and back out onto the rostrum. Heated baptismal pools have their own problems. Once Mr. Bussey, in his high waders, stepped into the water to discover it was scalding hot. The ceremony had to be postponed.

We have no Book of Common Prayer, so every pastor is free to devise his own way of conducting the baptism. Doug Murray has the candidates prepare a written testimony, which a family member reads from the pulpit before the person is baptized. There will usually be some words spoken before the candidate comes down into the water, stating the sanctity and meaning of the moment. Some preachers will say the same words each time; some will vary it. When the candidate is led down by the pastor's hand, one pastor might ask something like "Do you, John Doe, believe that . . . ?" Others will say something like "Jane Doe, upon your confession of Christ as Savior and Lord, I baptize you, my sister, in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit." Some Baptists in olden times practiced "trine baptism," dunking the candidate three times, but that has never been part of our tradition. Pastors have different ways of keeping the person from drowning. Some will hold a handkerchief over the person's nose. Others will have them hold their own nose. Members of our church who were baptized by Mr. Baucom remember those big hands coming over their face. Some people present special practical challenges: those who are very tall or very heavy, for instance. Or unique incidents happen. When I was baptized, I floated. Both feet came to the surface, and the pastor had to get his own balance and maneuver me back to my feet. When John Bunn was holding a meeting at our church a few years ago, he told of a baptismal service he attended where the bottom of the baptistry had become slippery with moss. He had a hard time keeping his

^{1.} Valentine, Rise of a Southern Town, 123.

footing, and at one point both he and the candidate fell and started flailing about, and the preacher hollered out (in John's words): "Close the damned curtains!"

When Lillie Kinney came to town, she wanted to join FBC, where her husband was a member. She had been a Methodist, though, and Mr. Baucom said she'd have to be baptized. She would be the last person baptized in the old church, and Mr. Baucom offered to do it in a private ceremony if she wished. The next week Mr. Baucom baptized her, with only her husband and two sons present. Then the old baptistry was drained for the last time.

Each pastor has his own way of bringing the ceremony to an end. Mr. Bussey, after all the baptisms had been performed, would return to the middle of the baptistry, take water in both hands and splash it, and, paraphrasing Acts 8:36, would ask, "Here is water, what doth hinder thee from being baptized?"

One of the practices that sets the Baptist denomination apart from most others, although hardly unique, is baptism by immersion. There is room in Catholic theology, under certain circumstances, for a valid baptism to be performed by someone other than a priest. Likewise, there is room in Baptist practice, though it's not bandied about, that a rare exception might be made to the necessity of total immersion. All three of our latest pastors, Bussey, Jarrard, and Murray, say that they have baptized persons by pouring or sprinkling in situations where it was impractical, unsafe, or even impossible to have an immersion. It's hard to believe that these three men are the only Baptist pastors in the South who have done this. Dr. Murray once had an adult candidate, Joyce Witherington, who had a mortal fear of water. He was willing to make an exception in this case and do some sort of semi-immersion, but Joyce trusted him, and he managed to keep her face just above the surface. She was terrified, but she wanted to be a member of this church in every bona fide way. In an earlier pastorate Dr. Jarrard once baptized a baby. This is a startling departure from Baptist insistence on believer's baptism, but the infant was near death, and it seemed to him an act of pastoral kindness to the parents to do something to welcome their baby into Christ's church in the only way that would ever be possible. Compassion and mercy seemed more important than doctrinal rigidity just then.

It is probably safe to say that most members of our church today have no idea what the term "alien immersion" means, but you can bet that every last member of the church in the 1800s was familiar with it. It was a big question then whether it was proper for a Baptist church to accept, without rebaptism, a member from another denomination such as the Disciples or the Methodists who had been immersed. This was a hot issue, especially in Southern Baptist churches in Tennessee, Kentucky, and westward, but as the convention became more unified the question seeped eastward as well.

In the mid-nineteenth century there was a movement that began in West Tennessee with the preaching of three Baptists from New England, claiming that the only true churches were Baptist churches and the only true manifestations of them were in local Baptist churches. No other group was a true church. The Presbyterians were just a religious society. On this basis, no one baptized in a church other than a Baptist church could be received, even if they had been immersed. That would be "alien immersion," a betrayal of sound principles. Some Southern Baptist churches went so far as to rebaptize people who had been immersed in Baptist churches not affiliated with the SBC. This is known as the Landmark movement, and it was one of the various Baptist traditions that came together in 1845 in the grand merger of traditions known as the Southern Baptist Convention. It did not have much effect on Baptist churches east of the mountains until preachers trained at Southern Baptist Seminary became familiar with the doctrine. Some were convinced and, when coming to pastor churches in the East, brought Landmark ideas with them. By and large, though, such issues have not bothered churches in our area nearly as much as churches west of the mountains.

During Mr. Bussey's pastorate we relaxed our requirements to the point that we no longer absolutely insisted on someone coming from another denomination being immersed at all. We now have this written into our constitution. It may well be that Barbara Bussey had something to do with this, indirectly. Barbara was a Presbyterian, and when she had to be immersed in order to be a member of Bill's church, she didn't like it one bit. Bill Bussey was amenable to change. So was the congregation. We would lose good prospective members from time to time over this, and it just didn't seem as important an issue as it would have appeared to J. B. Solomon and the reverend presbytery who came down in May 1860 to get us started. When a person joins who has not been immersed, we explain that we would really prefer that they agree to immersion, but if they feel that they have been truly baptized into Christ's church, and confess belief in Christ, it suffices.

Along with the question of alien immersion goes what was once the burning question of open communion or closed communion. Open communion means that any baptized Christian may participate in the Lord's Supper. Closed communion means that only fellow Baptists may participate—and in some areas, only members of that particular congregation. This, again, is the result of the Landmark controversy. In some Baptist churches in Tennessee it was the practice in my youth, and may still be, that communion was held after the regular worship services, and people who were not members were actually requested to leave. In the nineteenth century, closed communion was the default position among most Baptists in the United States. Those who dissented from it, like our own William Hooper, were lonely souls writing occasional letters to state Baptist papers. With the growth of big churches in

the early twentieth century, however, even very traditional Baptists ceased to make much of an issue of this, out of simple desire not to offend guests. Our church today, like many others, actually issues an open invitation to all believers to join with us in commemorating the Lord's death at the table. Most Baptists in the South today practice de facto open communion by simply not saying anything at all about it and letting whoever wants to participate do so. Just when FBC began practicing open communion we don't know, but it was at least as early as Mr. Baucom's pastorate, since it was never an issue at all for Mr. Bussey. It may actually go back to Dr. Hooper and the very beginning of the church, but there is no evidence one way or the other.

In the early days Baptists used wine for communion, as did everyone else. Baptist historian William Brackney knows of New England churches that would use beer or other alcoholic drinks when wine was not available. After all, wine is the natural product. Grape juice is a modern processed food that requires pasteurization, refrigeration, and hermetic sealing. Some churches had members who took on the duty of making the wine, just as they made their own bread for the service. The nonalcoholic drink was developed in the 1860s by Thomas Welch, a New Jersey Methodist and physician, for the express purpose of use in churches. By 1893 it was commercially available. Baptist and Methodist churches quickly started substituting it for wine at the Lord's Supper. Primitive Baptists continue the use of wine, and I am reliably informed that there are Southern Baptist churches in rural areas of Georgia that have never abandoned the use of wine. There appears to be no record of when Wilson Baptist Church made the change.

William Harrell, whom we met in chapter 6, described what he saw when he entered a Baptist church for the first time, in 1840: "This Baptist Church has no railing around the pulpit in front, and that struck me as a little strange, and different from what I had been accustomed to see, in all the churches known to me; but I observed that in place of a railing, there stood a little table, just below the pulpit, and to-day, on this occasion, the table was neatly covered with a white cloth, that seemed to have something under it that held it up in the centre of the cloth. It was all new to me." In chapter 16 we discussed the change we made in communion practice, in deference to the public health movement, of ceasing our use of the common chalice and going to individual cups. We gave our communion set to Fountain Baptist

^{2.} Brackney, The Baptists, 65.

^{3.} My grandmother in Mississippi made the blackberry wine for her Methodist church.

^{4.} Brackney, The Baptists, 65-66.

^{5.} Unpublished autobiography of William B. Harrell, p. 90, Harrell Family Papers, UNC-Charlotte.

Church. In 1970, Miss Lucy Culpepper decided we should have it back, since Fountain was no longer using it. She got it, and it was placed behind glass in the church parlor, a memento of earliest days. Unfortunately, it was stolen and probably changed hands at a flea market somewhere. In the church newsletter describing the return of the chalice, it was described as having been used here from 1862 to 1911. We knew when it went out of use, but the date of acquisition as 1862 is new information. If that came from Miss Lucy, she may have known, but I can find nothing to verify it. Those who remember it do not think it had engraving on it, but still, if anyone finds it, we'd sure like to have it back.

Originally, when we used the common chalice, people would come forward to take communion, just as they do in many denominations today. In 1894 the Central Presbyterian Church in Rochester, New York, introduced individual glass communion cups so as to avoid the health dangers of the common chalice. Baptist churches quickly began using them, even though Baptist churches like all others often possessed prized silver chalices given to churches as memorials.⁶ Our church voted to begin individual communion service on September 6, 1911. At that time the church probably installed the little racks for the cups on the backs of the pews. They are visible in a photograph of the Lamm-Harrell wedding in 1952, which was held in the old church on Pine and Nash.

As we observe the Supper at the eleven o'clock service these days, the deacons line up on the two sides of the chancel, and the pastor takes a stack of the trays containing the juice down the line and each deacon takes one. A keen observer once noticed that when Dr. Murray did this, each time a deacon took a tray, Murray would give the stack a quick little twist. What kind of arcane priestcraft was this? So she asked. Once, he related, while he was an associate in Baltimore, a deacon took a tray, and the pastor noticed that one cup from the tray beneath was stuck to the bottom as the deacon walked away with it. He waited anxiously as the tray was passed back and forth in the congregation, waiting for the cup of juice to spill onto someone's clean white dress. It did not. But ever since then, he was careful to make sure it never happened again. Pastor Murray learned from the experience.

While having the deacons distribute the elements among the congregation is our usual practice, we have also experimented with other ways. At the nine o'clock service we usually come forward for communion, take a piece of bread from the tray held by one deacon or minister, and dip it into the cup held by another. Most participants seem to like this; it makes us do something to receive what God has to offer. Beginning in December 1992, during

^{6.} Brackney, The Baptists, 66.

Dr. Jarrard's pastorate, we began serving communion to the homebound by having deacons take a communion kit to their homes on the Sundays of the observance and either sitting with the person(s) through the radio service and giving communion at the right time, or attending them later with a brief prepared order of service. Not many Baptist churches in the South do this (Landmark influence), but it has been much appreciated by those who are visited. While it has been general Southern Baptist practice—for reasons I know not—to observe communion only once a quarter, FBC has since its earliest days as Wilson Baptist Church observed the Supper monthly.

The Scripture at the head of this chapter, "Keep the ordinances," which was the text for J. B. Solomon's sermon at the first worship service held at Wilson Baptist, is actually better translated "Keep the traditions," and it appears that way, or else "teachings" or "instructions," in every version since then. So let's expand this chapter past baptism and communion to a couple of our other traditions that are worth looking at over time.

Preaching the word is one of these. It is sometimes said that if Baptists have a sacrament at all, it is preaching. The history of preaching at FBC, or just about anywhere else, is hard to trace due to the lack of any recordings of early preachers at work. We do have sermons and sermon outlines, which show that preachers, at least in our Baptist tradition, gave time and thought to their sermons and often wrote them out. Sometimes they were printed and distributed or published in a paper such as the Biblical Recorder. Sometimes they were read from a manuscript, but most of the time the preacher was familiar enough with his sermon by the time he delivered it that he did not have to consult the page very often. While the preaching of the Separate Baptist (Sandy Creek) tradition could get quite heated and lively, it seems that most of the preaching along the seaboard was more restrained. J. J. Jeter recalls the preaching of a well-known Richmond pastor in 1824: "His manner was calm and slow; his voice was distinct and solemn; his style was pure, condensed, and vigorous; his gestures were sparing but appropriate, and his thoughts were pertinent, weighty, and impressive."7 Or another preacher in the Northern Neck: the sermon "was delivered without vociferation, but in a clear, well-sustained voice, growing more earnest and tender from the beginning to the end. It was not profound, not sublime, not overpowering; but it was pertinent, plain, eloquent, evangelical, impressive."8 A sermon he heard in Baltimore is described as "graceful rather than profound, and pleasing rather than impressive." He praised the preaching of Robert Ryland, presi-

^{7.} Jeter, Recollections of a Long Life, 128-129.

^{8.} Jeter, Recollections of a Long Life, 160.

^{9.} Jeter, Recollections of a Long Life, 165.

dent of Richmond College: "His aim was to make his hearers think rather than to feel, and to act rather than to speculate." ¹⁰

Dr. Jeter tells of us own preaching method, which was to prepare a text carefully but not take notes into the pulpit. On one occasion he began by reading the text for the sermon. He finished reading, and as he closed the Bible, a big chunk of plaster fell from the ceiling and almost hit him. Jeter promptly forgot what he was preaching about. He turned to a deacon and asked what he had just read, but the old fellow just sat goggle-eyed and petrified. He turned to another, who said, "Don't ask me." He was about to give up and sit down when it suddenly came back to him. He writes that he knew of preachers who could just get up and talk *ex tempore* without a text in mind, but he couldn't do it, and sometimes couldn't do very well even with a text."

Jeter was certainly familiar with Baptist preaching of the Separatist or Sandy Creek tradition. He describes the preaching of Elder Greer, in the mountains of Virginia. He dressed very plainly, and "intoned" his sermons. "He sung his hymns, prayers, sermons and exhortations all in the same tune, and most mournful tune it was. . . . If a stranger, unacquainted with his language, had heard his intonations he would have concluded that the old man was in fearful distress." Other people have referred to this preaching style as a "holy whine." Jeter also discusses Greer's method of biblical interpretation, which was alien to him. He spiritualized the Scripture, finding spiritual significance in every word, every letter, every jot and tittle of a letter. By way of contrast, he remembers Mr. Burnett of Roanoke County: "His sermons were very short, usually occupying no more than half an hour, free from the holy tone then so common in the pulpit, and delivered in a very quiet, solemn manner." Notice that a half-hour sermon is described as short.

Nineteenth-century preaching in eastern North Carolina was probably pretty much what Dr. Jeter was familiar with in eastern Virginia. Sermons were well thought out, constructed with an eye to literary grace, and delivered with conviction but not necessarily brute force. The loudness of a preacher's voice was often determined simply by the space it had to fill. A little meetinghouse like Wilson Baptist on Green Street didn't require very much, but the preacher always had to take into account those who were hard of hearing. As churches grew larger, voices tended to become louder. For one thing, there were no mikes and amplification systems. For another, some preachers were taking cues from the traveling evangelists, who preached to large audiences and who simply had to preach loudly in order to be heard.

A change was in the making for Southern Baptists everywhere in 1870,

^{10.} Jeter, Recollections of a Long Life, 211-212.

^{11.} Jeter, Recollections of a Long Life, 201.

^{12.} Jeter, Recollections of a Long Life, 98-100.

when John A. Broadus, professor at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, published the first edition of his Treatise on the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons. Later revised by Professor of Homiletics E. C. Dargan of Southern Seminary, it has gone through countless editions and has never gone out of print, although it is no longer the standard textbook for student preachers it once was. This is a book of 553 pages. Broadus covered every aspect of preaching from the selection and study of the biblical text and its careful, not fanciful, interpretation to the method of delivery in the pulpit. Every aspect was orderly with suggestions for training and practice. A strict outline was not necessary, but the logic should progress to an inevitable conclusion. Writing in a day before public address systems, he suggested ways of training the voice to project farther, not in an attempt to use loudness as a substitute for thought but simply to be heard. Gestures were important in those days, when the unamplified voice could be hard to understand, the use of stylized gestures helped give visual underlining to the spoken word but Broadus deplored the practice of banging on the Bible. Preachers were advised to fashion sentences grammatically and with style. Correct diction was emphasized. Reading from manuscripts was not ruled out, but one was steered away from it. The book even gives attention to the forms of public prayer, urging thoughtful avoidance of stock phrases. We can be confident that any of our preachers trained at Southern Seminary in the late nineteenth or early twentieth century got much of their preaching style from what they learned from the Broadus-Dargan textbook. This was a text used even as late as William Bussey's seminary training. As to what a sermon sounded like (and looked like) in the early twentieth century, we can probably get a decent approximation from old newsreels and recordings of speeches by presidents from TR to FDR.

Mr. Bussey's preaching was more modern in its approach than anyone's would have been earlier. He never had to worry about being heard. A microphone was always there to pick up his voice, although he discovered early on, when sitting in the balcony for the service, that the public address system in the new church was lousy, and he saw to it that it was replaced. Preachers often take as models preachers whom they admire. In the Southern Baptist tradition this essentially meant modeling your preaching after other preachers trained on Broadus and Dargan, but those who happened to be especially good at it. Mr. Bussey sought his models more broadly. One of the most famous preachers in America in Bussey's youth was Harry Emerson Fosdick, a liberal Baptist who was longtime pastor at the interdenominational Riverside Church in New York City and who published quite a lot of material, sermons as well as inspirational and exegetical material. Fosdick provided a different approach to preaching, which was an inspiration for Mr. Bussey: not that he plagiarized Fosdick's sermons (though he probably borrowed a

phrase or two) but that he could emulate Fosdick's approach to developing a sermon. This familiarity would have come through reading Fosdick's work, not from hearing him, so Mr. Bussey's pulpit style was probably much like that of preachers he had grown up hearing. But the content and structure of the sermon was no longer tied to the formulas developed in Louisville in the nineteenth century.

With Dr. Jarrard and Dr. Murray a rather different approach came to our pulpit. The inspiration here is principally Fred Craddock, a minister of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) who taught homiletics at the Candler School of Theology at Emory. Craddock dispenses with three-point outline sermons and develops a kind of narrative that invites the listener to follow the preacher through the development of the sermon. Whereas older preaching would assemble the logic of the argument into a conclusion to present to the people and call for their assent, narrative preaching may wend its way to an open end, forcing the hearers to provide their own conclusion. The style tends to be folksy rather than elegant, and humor is freely, if carefully, used. Often the approach taken in the sermon is suggested by the form of the biblical text—parable, poem, historical narrative, prophetic oracle, whatever. The preacher is encouraged to study the biblical text in its immediate context and its wider context, to make connections between the text and other Scripture that may resonate to its frequency, and to construct stories or discover true stories that are capable of carrying the themes of the text into the experience of a contemporary American sitting in a pew.

Dr. Murray has taken this form of preaching so far as to occasionally dress for the part and present himself as an actor on the stage. It's the kind of thing that would get tiresome quickly if done often, but Murray does it seldom enough and judiciously enough that it comes as something of a treat.

Another powerful influence on the preaching we have heard, particularly from Dr. Jarrard, has been that of Carlyle Marney, a product of Southern Seminary who developed a pungent, almost confrontational style of preaching challenging Southern Baptist complacency. He was pastor of Myers Park Baptist Church in Charlotte, one of the few Southern Baptist churches that could fairly be called liberal. He was dear to many preachers—of many denominations—because he experienced and sympathized with the spiritual problems faced by pastors. He began Interpreter's House at Lake Junaluska, a place where preachers feeling burned out could go for renewal.

The preaching and writing of Clarence Jordan (pronounced Georgia-style, "Jerdan") has also been influential. Jordan was a New Testament scholar from Southern Seminary who devoted his career to interracial harmony and work on behalf of the poor. He was the founder of Koinonia Farms at Americus, Georgia (near Jimmy Carter's Plains) and was also involved in the founding of Habitat for Humanity. His approach to Scripture was seen in his popular

Cotton Patch translations of the New Testament. Dr. Jarrard believes that Marney and Jordan went far toward making the 1950s the golden age of Baptist preaching.

The pulpit style of modern preaching has pretty well developed in the same ways as the oratorical style of political figures. Flamboyant gestures and shouted points don't go over well in the television era. This doesn't demonstrate lack of passion on the part of the preacher. Rather, the passion of the message is channeled into the walk through the message that the preacher invites the congregation to take with him.

It wasn't so long ago that men in the congregation would give the preacher occasional support and encouragement with a loud "amen." Surely it was common in earlier days, but plenty of folks in our congregation remember Brothers A. J. Sykes and A. B. Carroll belting one out now and then. It continued even into Mr. Bussey's early years here. Today it would be so unexpected that it might make the preacher forget his text, like old Brother Jeter in Virginia when the ceiling fell down on him.

Revival preaching falls into a separate category. An earlier form of revivals, called "protracted meetings," could go on for two weeks or more until everyone was exhausted, and their focus was on aggressive oratorical evangelism. Later the enthusiasm was restrained to a single week of revival meetings, sometimes twice a year but gradually dwindling to once a year. That one week a year, however, became about as firm a part of Southern Baptist liturgical tradition as Lent in the Episcopal Church: it had to be held. There was a sensible strategy. A perceptive, sensitive pastor could not address the

spiritual needs of his congregation with a constant diet of evangelistic sermons. Turning attention to the theme once or twice a year bore results—as long as people from outside the church were apt to attend. In the early twentieth century, church revivals were big events in a city the size of Wilson; there usually wasn't a lot else to do. And they had a certain entertainment value. Unlike a worship service, structured so as develop a devout atmosphere that would lead up to the proclamation of the word of God, a revival service was partly a show, in which lively music and activity led up to an energetic sermon and an emotionally intense invitation—just the kind of thing early Baptists tried to



A. J. Sykes, one of the last "ameners" (Betsy Graves)

avoid. As late as 1906 a Granville County preacher, J. A. Stradley (he styled himself "Elder Stradley"), wrote a front-page article in the Biblical Recorder inveighing against "begging and worrying people to make a profession of faith before they have any to profess." This, he says, is especially dangerous in the case of pressure put on children. "Let penitents be invited to front seats for instruction and prayer . . . but do not urge them to make a profession of faith. Let them do this of their own accord when they have an inward experience of sins forgiven and love to God."13 The old-time Baptist preachers were concerned simply with saving souls, not adding notches to their guns. In 1916 S. L. Morgan, pastor of FBC in Henderson, confided to his diary, "Our people have suffered from certain evangelists of the wild-cat type, and shy [away from] a meeting that lacks in dignity and sanity."14 With the coming of the twentieth century, bigness came to be mistaken for a sign of spiritual quality and became an end in its own right, and not just in churches. Pressure from conventions and associations made pastors feel that just about anything was permissible as long as it got people to walk those aisles. A church looking for a new pastor can consult the relevant associational records and see just how many new members a particular prospect was bringing in. Numbers counted. In my own experience at FBC in Wilson, the invitation has never been abused as an engineered contrivance to evoke an emotional response. It may have been in the past, but it is certainly not in the mainstream of our church's tradition, as far back as the founding.

In recent decades revivals have tended to be a three- or four-night series of services devoted less to outright evangelism than to the strengthening of the spiritual life of the congregation. This is practical, since only the faithful church members can reasonably be expected to attend. Those who yearn for an old-fashioned bring-them-in revival meeting with sinners walking the aisles are yearning for the return of a cultural context that is past and gone. Camp meetings, protracted meetings in churches, and revival seasons all evolved in response to their historical matrix, and that evolution continues as churches reimagine the purposes and methods of evangelism. Pastors Bussey, Jarrard, and Murray have all been in demand as revival speakers elsewhere, but none have engaged in explosive preaching that grabs you by the ears and demands attention. Their preaching engages the mind, which, interestingly, is precisely where early Baptists thought true conversion takes place.

Another Baptist tradition that could fairly be called sacramental is the invitation, which we have seen evolving over the century and a half of our

^{13.} BR, August 22, 1906.

^{14.} S. L. Morgan diary entry for September 23, 1916, S. L. Morgan Papers, Southern Historical Collection, UNC–Chapel Hill.

history. Originally no invitation was given. Acceptance of Christ was a thought-out decision made when one's mind was clear, not whipped up into an emotional frenzy. You solemnly attended a business meeting on Saturday (or whenever) and gave your testimony, whereupon you were accepted for baptism and membership. The frontier tradition of the camp meeting evolved into the style of the traveling evangelists who preached to large numbers and who pressed for decisions to be made on the spot. This was known in the old days as "pathetic preaching." We would call it "emotional"; the meaning of the word "pathetic" has changed. Toward the end of the nineteenth century, offering an invitation at the end of a sermon became common practice, and during Mr. Baucom's pastorate we dispensed with a special called business meeting and simply voted people into the church after the invitational hymn. Under Mr. Bussey we reverted to the earlier practice of welcoming people who have offered themselves for membership, but postponing voting them into membership until the pastor has had a chance to talk with them.

Augustine defined a sacrament as "an outward and visible sign of an inward, spiritual grace." Does that not describe the invitation? Consider the stately words of the old Book of Common Prayer when the priest invites the faithful to come forward and partake of the sacrament of Holy Communion: "You who do truly and earnestly repent you of your sins, and are in love and charity with your neighbours, and intend to lead a new life, following the commandments of God, and walking henceforth in his holy ways; Draw near with faith, and take this holy Sacrament to your comfort; and make your confession to Almighty God, devoutly kneeling." Does that not sound like an invitation? We don't ask people to kneel when they come forward anymore, but in times past revivalists sure did. Folks didn't come forward to make a profession so much as to be prayed over, "labored" over, with the pastor or a deacon seeing them through the labor of loosing one's hold on one's own life and surrendering to Christ. Things change. "

^{15.} I developed this thought in "The Invitation: A Baptist Sacrament?" SBC Today, March 8, 1991.

Chapter 28

Laborers Together

We are God's servants, working together.

-1 CORINTHIANS 3:9 NRSV

WE MET OUR FIRST ASSOCIATE PASTOR back in chapter 17, when Mr. Chambliss hired him to help with the Five Points Mission. From then until 1921, when Dr. Mercer was pastor, Walter C. Richardson, as associate, served Five Points as pastor and helped us out at the mother church when we needed pulpit supply or such. The need would not be felt again until Mr. Baucom's time.

We first met Thellis "Sonny" Myers when Mr. Baucom brought him to town to help get the Forward Movement program going. Sonny got to know some of us pretty well. About a year after Mildred Grissom gave birth to her twin girls, a year during which she had existed on little sleep, Sonny visited her while the girls were playing in a sandbox. "Mildred," said Sonny, "I think one of your girls is eating sand." She replied with all confidence, "That's okay. She'll stop when she gets enough." Everyone who was at FBC in those days remembers Sue Pettus, the old gal who said, "I've been here long enough I can say any damned thing I want to!" Sonny recalls his father-in-law chuckling over an article in the *Daily Times* that mentioned Mrs. Pettus. Wilson had an ice storm, and the paper reported that there "had not been a lot of damage or injuries from the storm; however, Mrs. Sue Pettus slipped on her icy porch and hurt her somewhat." Nice choice of words there. Sonny remembers Leonard Collins as a gentle, gracious, kind, and patient man, and



Thellis and Mary Collins Myers (Thellis Myers)

Lottie as having more energy than anyone else he ever knew. He remembers Mr. Baucom as a very reserved person, and counts as a personal success one evening in a youth meeting when he got Baucom to join him in a duo lipsyncing and playing fake ukuleles to the Everly Brothers' hit record "Wake Up, Little Susie." Myers thinks Baucom actually enjoyed being invited and letting his hair down a bit.

Sonny left in 1959, the year he married Mary Collins, the Collins's daughter, to become pastor of a new church in Smithfield. After a couple of other pastorates, he went into the business world, and in 1992 he retired from his position as a regional sales manager for Wallace Computer Services. He and Mary now live in Marietta, Georgia.

Dan Shingleton came on board in 1961, while an ACC student, as student youth director. He supervised young people's programs and planned pro-

1. Personal letter from Thellis Myers, May 5, 2009.

grams for Sunday evenings and a few trips. When Mr. Bussey came, Dan volunteered to step down so as to clear the ground for the new pastor to set up his own program, but Bussey wanted him to stay, so he did, and left after he graduated in 1963. During Mr. Bussey's initial weeks Dan drove him around town to meet members in their homes. Dan went on to a distinguished career in public health concerns of the state of North Carolina; he also spent a few years teaching at ACC or, as it is now known, Barton College.

Soon after Dan's student time ended, Pastor Bussey asked us to employ Miss Edna Earle Poyner, who had been his minister of education at Chester. She came along and did a remarkable job, especially with the young people, but she wasn't really happy here, and chose to leave in May 1964 to take a position at Coker College in Hartsville, South Carolina. Later she worked with the Darlington County Schools there. She visited us on Sunday, February 8, 1976, and at the vesper services she gave a closing prayer that was quoted in the "Pastor's Paragraph" of the *First Baptist News* the next week. Miss Poyner died in her home state of Mississippi in 2003 at age eighty. There is now an endowed Edna Earle Poyner Scholarship at Coker College in her honor.

Some of the intensity of the Bussey years can be viewed by looking at the time that Dale Sessions spent with us. A graduate of Carson-Newman College and Southeastern Seminary, ordained by Bailey Baptist Church, he came as our assistant pastor in July 1966 (today we would call this person the "associate pastor"). He was with us through May 1970, and during that time Bussey and Sessions were an effective team. Both men today look back on their time together as cordial and supportive, even though they often had different takes on issues. Dale was a young activist in a time when lots of people feared such types. Mr. Bussey tried to deal with the intense times we were going through with honesty but also with wary patience. As pastor, he gave Dale a long leash, and that meant the pastor himself had to absorb a lot of guff from church members. Where Dale would err on the side of action, Mr. Bussey preferred to err on the side of caution. Proverbs 27:17 has their team about right: "As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens the wits of another" (NEB).

Dale lost no time in assessing the state of the educational program of the church. The most glaring problem was that the Training Union was moribund. He recommended pulling the plug on it and instituting a tailor-made youth program. His creation turned out to be more successful. During the 1950s the BTU at FBC had been the place for Wilson's young people (white, of course) to be on Sunday evening. Over that decade and into the 1960s youth culture outside the church developed, and TV began taking an increasing toll on church attendance. The BTU's decline represented something of a loss, but Dale delivered a merciful and necessary coup de grâce and substituted a more viable alternative, which basically still endures. Dale was popular with

the youth of the church and was marvelous with the Baptist Student Union at ACC. Our grounds were the scene of many hot dog suppers for the college group.

Dale assumed most of the responsibility for pastoral counseling, although whenever a member specifically wanted to confer with the pastor, Mr. Bussey of course took it on. Most older members did. But Dale became so well



Dale Sessions (Photo by author)

known for his skill at this that he began to see a few people from other congregations. He is happy that he was able to prevent at least two suicides. He found this the most satisfying part of his work. He shared responsibility fifty/fifty with Mr. Bussey for the Wednesday evening services.

The most crucial year of this teamship, as well as a crucial year in our national history, was 1968. It was a terrible, terrible year for the country, and the church had a stormy passage through it. The year began with a bloody but Pyrrhic victory by our armed forces in Vietnam. Martin Luther King was murdered. Robert F. Kennedy was murdered. All the furies broke loose in Chicago at the Democratic National Convention in August. (If you like, you may add here that Richard Nixon was elected president.) The year ended with a virulent influenza epidemic in which a lot of our people took sick, along with some of our local doctors. The fall before, the church educational committee, under Dale's leadership, had agreed to try an experimental year of using American Baptist Sunday School literature rather than Southern Baptist. Dale considered it much more relevant and muscular. He thought there was an entrée provided by Mr. Baucom's having used American Baptist literature in some programs, but there was a reaction. People found the new literature difficult. In February 1968 Mr. Bussey's pastoral letter in the newsletter encouraged folks to study through it and give it a chance. Then someone in the church got word from a relative or friend somewhere that the American Baptist Convention was a communist organization, and on this ground a lot of pressure was put on Dale and Mr. Bussey to end the experiment, which they did in June 1968.

Dale attended an anti-war rally in DC early in the year. Mr. Bussey preferred that he not go, but didn't forbid it, just said he wouldn't be paid for the time. The group met with Sen. Sam Ervin, who heard them out but left the scene when the group would not. It was all on TV, and several church members saw it and didn't like it. Yet Dale credits Mr. Bussey's forbearance; he didn't throw him "under the bus."

In April came the news of Dr. King's death in Memphis. Wilson experienced a bit of rioting, warehouse fires, and so on—small-time stuff compared to infernos of anger like Memphis. But the authorities were leery. On Sunday after the event a memorial service was held at Jackson Chapel First Baptist Church,² after which there was to be a march to the courthouse. Both Mr. Bussey and Dale attended the service, but Dale continued by participating in the march, in which three other white clergy participated. Lots of people, including the KKK, lined the street to jeer at the marchers, and National Guard troops were present at intersections with guns trained on the marchers. Nothing disturbing happened at the scene, but there were nasty aftershocks. Dale received a telephoned death threat from the KKK, and one church member called to accuse him of being a communist.

Mr. Bussey and Dale both were active members of the Wilson County Ministerial Association. During this time the local hospital was having a problem with several preachers who would go to the rooms of patients they didn't know to try to convert them. It asked the association for some help. Mr. Bussey, Dale, and the Presbyterian pastors worked out a plan to establish a voluntary chaplain's group, the only clergy authorized to visit patients without the specific request of the patient. This group later provided training in spiritual care for nursing students. Dale worked within the association to see that the city began extending water and sewer service to low-income areas of the city that up to then had access only to well water. He and several other local ministers began to notice some of their most active members becoming lethargic and nonactive. They discovered they were all taking Valium as prescribed. They brought it to the attention of the president of the local medical association, who was an elder at First Presbyterian. He discussed the matter with his pastor and other clergy, then suggested the medical society investigate. When they did, they found out the observations were well founded, so they put out new guidelines for prescribed doses of Valium.

Dale left in July 1970 under his own steam. In these last paragraphs I've put some emphasis on his activities in the church and community, but this is not to put down Mr. Bussey's part. Pastor Bussey stood behind Dale, never tried to silence him, and insulated him from a lot of distress. During a recent visit to Wilson, the two of them chatted, and Mr. Bussey gave Dale credit for his social activism and preaching and said, "We should have done more of that." Dale took it as a compliment, which it surely was.

They made a good team.

Dale went to become associate pastor at Binkley Memorial Baptist Church in Chapel Hill, and from there to associate positions at FBC in Bloomington, Indiana; Lake Avenue Baptist in Rochester, New York; and then as se-

^{2.} Jackson Chapel FBC is an African American congregation.

nior minister at First Park Baptist in Plainfield, New Jersey. When his father in Columbia, South Carolina, came down with Alzheimer's, he came back south as chaplain in the Department of Mental Health, Addiction and Drug Treatment Center in Columbia. He now enjoys a happy retirement, but occasionally returns to Wilson to visit old friends, especially since Faye Maclaga married Tom King, an old college buddy of Dale's from Carson-Newman.

Dale was followed by Larry Bennett, another South Carolinian, this one from Orangeburg. He grew up in FBC there and, having graduated from USC in political science, was ordained there in 1968, while a student at Southeastern Seminary. He and his wife Libby came to us June 15, 1970, fresh from graduation at the seminary. He preached his first sermon, "The Halfway Place," on July 12, and on the following Wednesday the church threw a big picnic to greet the Bennetts.

Larry's responsibilities covered the whole range of the educational program, but his special interest was with the children and young people. He expanded the youth program here, aided greatly by the addition to our property of "the House." He continued working with the BSU at ACC; it saw considerable growth while Larry guided it. Special programs for the senior adults were a contribution, and in the Sunday School he made the heretical move of having classes for couples. Southern Baptists just didn't do that. Boys and girls, men and women, might sit together in church, but not in Sunday School! The church softball and basketball teams got started under his leadership. In the wider Wilson community Larry was active in the Wilson Ministerial Association and was one of the founders of the Wilson Crisis Center. He served on the Wilson County Migrant Workers Council and on the Governor's Council on Aging and chaired UNICEF drives in the city for a couple of years.

In the fall of 1970 he began working with the Youth Fellowship. Larry Whitlock, a young psychology professor at ACC, was a leader in it, along with Hilton Carlton and Mary Moss. "The House" was open every Friday and Saturday night, except for Fridays when there was a home football game. The house was old and needed attention. Larry tried his best to keep the place in repair with duct tape, plywood, paint, locks, whatever—but the youth came right behind him and unrepaired. He was brave enough to take the youth on hayrides at Camp Contentnea. Once they forgot to take the hot dogs, so they picked some up at a local pool hall. They had a retreat at Umstead State Park, one of the state's few parks with any overnight accommodations—never mind that there were no lights or bathrooms. They went to some WFU football games.

While all this was going on, Larry was continuing his own education at Southeastern. He earned the master of theology degree in 1972, writing a thesis entitled "The Ministry of the First Baptist Church of Wilson, North

Larry and Libby Bennett, 2001 (Bennett family)



Carolina, to People of Advanced Age." A glutton for punishment, he pushed on and got a doctor of ministry degree in 1974, with a dissertation entitled "Parent-Adolescent Communication." He drew a lot of his material for this from questionnaires he would give to our own young people. In the *First Baptist News* for July 26, 1972, he listed nine very sensible and practical rules that should govern visits to the sick in the hospital.

Larry didn't attend Youth Fellowship on Sunday, January 21, 1973. He was with Libby at the hospital, where she gave birth to the first of their three daughters, Ruth Elizabeth. The young people kept the phone lines to the hospital humming, though, to keep up with what was happening. The young people remembered March of that year as their first trip to Camp Kanata. It had electricity! Beds with mattresses! The problem was that they couldn't sneak out without Larry catching them in his flashlight beam and blowing his whistle. A memorable moment in that trip was when a dog killed a duck. The kids blamed it on Mr. Bennett. Otherwise they had a lot of group discussions about s-e-x.³

The Bennett family left us January 31, 1975. Larry went to assume the pastorate of FBC in Madison, North Carolina. He must have done a bang-up job: he was there thirty-one years. Not long after he arrived, Madison suffered flooding, and he was out with others in boats moving people to higher

3. A lot of this information, and even some of the words, comes from a letter the church teens wrote to Mr. Bennett when he was about to leave us in 1975.

ground. Larry retired in 2006, but two years later the Town Council of Madison voted him "Citizen of the Year." He did a lot for the community, serving on the Council on Aging and the town Planning-Zoning Board, and working with Habitat for Humanity and the local ministerial association. Libby was active, too. A second-grade teacher with a special interest in science, she published in state and national periodicals; she also received a couple of prestigious grants and, in 1990, a Presidential Award for Excellence in Science Teaching. She retired in 2000 but continued to teach English as a second language part-time through 2008. With their three daughters grown and gone, Larry and Libby probably have time to relax, but it doesn't sound like they know how.

William H. Edwards followed in the job on January 1, 1978. Bill was one of our own, the kid that used to carry groceries to the car at the store across the street from the church. Bill was a religion major at ACC for the first two years of college, then transferred to East Carolina to get a degree in social work. Two degrees, in fact: he earned a master's in family relations and social work. He did enter the ministry, though, and was ordained by Pactolus Baptist Church, which he pastored for three years. While there a lady complimented him on his warm sermons. He took this as a compliment until his wife Carolyn pointed out that one definition of "warm" was "not so hot." (He told this story on himself.) Preaching was not his strength. He wasn't bad at all, but it wasn't his major interest. He preferred working directly with people in specific programs and in counseling situations.

He returned to Wilson in 1974 as director of the Wilson Child Development Center, setting up programs for developmentally disabled children and doing some teaching. That was where we found him. As our associate pastor, Edwards enjoyed his work with the BSU at the college. The ACC Baptist Student Union had come to rely on FBC for providing help and facilities, as well as a modest contribution. The BSU was a line item in our budget. Rick Clayton, now pastor of Hayes Barton United Methodist Church in Raleigh, was one of the BSU leaders at the time, and he remembers Bill well: "Bill Edwards offered compassion and understanding in our years of wrestling with the big theological questions. There was a winsome way about Bill that freed college students to be open in the search of faith. He obviously had a mysterious side—always thinking analytically with that puzzled look on his brow. The long talks he shared with us in van rides to and from Ridgecrest⁴ formed my faith and pointed my life toward ministry. Bill wanted to stay young—and for that reason he enjoyed conversing with college-age folks to stay abreast

^{4.} Ridgecrest is a large Southern Baptist assembly grounds near Black Mountain, NC.



Bill Edwards (Wilson Times)

of the latest thinking. Bill gave himself freely to the lives of others—offering gems of wisdom and counsel."⁵

Bill began the "Search for Action" group that met in the church for several years. It was a meeting place for those in the community who had a variety of physical or mental disorders. Early in his stay here he identified and engaged Clay and Susan Johnson and Donnie and Angie Hare as interested and capable workers with young people. His primary focus remained counseling, however. He never had any particular desire to attend divinity school or become a senior pastor. Eventually he opened a part-time private counseling service, and within a couple of years, in

1984, he left his job at FBC to work full-time at it. He was positioning himself for the future. He realized that Mr. Bussey would be retiring before too long, and he thought it wise to leave the associate's position for a new pastor to fill, meanwhile establishing his own place in the wider Wilson community. His intent was to work primarily with teenagers. "Teenagers," he said, "today have so many problems, and they can't always talk to their parents or their ministers. As both a parent and a minister, I think I can be someone helpful they can come and talk to." Mr. Bussey said he hated to lose him, but he said he was sure Bill would stay active in the church, and—with a sly grin—added that they might get him to do some of the same things he'd been doing without having to pay him. While in private practice, Bill taught parenting classes for the Wilson Mental Health Association for sixteen years. He died just after midnight Saturday, May 15, 2004, in Johnston County when his car, going over 100 miles per hour, hit a bridge. The funeral was at FBC, with Pastor Murray and Pastor Emeritus Bussey presiding.

Burdette Robinson came our way from FBC in Sylva as associate pastor in March 1985. He was single at the time (though not when he left), and remembers gratefully the many good cooks in the church and the opportunities we had for meals at the church, especially those he enjoyed with the senior adults. Burdette's interest was squarely in Christian education. He emphasized not simply the Sunday School, but adequate training and preparation

^{5.} E-mail from Rick Clayton to the author, May 2, 2009.

^{6.} Conversation with Carolyn Edwards; WDT, September 24, 1984.

for teaching in the Sunday School, which saw considerable growth during his stay. Some of the materials were obtained from the SBC by new satellite technology that was installed. When Mr. Bussey retired, Burdette shared with Clyde Patterson and Carolyn Hill much of the church responsibility. Dr. Cashwell's interim ministry gave him the opportunity to wear a robe in worship for the first time. He says he truly began to feel like a minister during that interim period. "The robe certainly helped," he says. He taught a seminary extension class on the history of Christianity at FBC Farmville for nine weeks in 1989. Burdette was always an active volunteer director of the BSU at the college. It was this work that made him sense a call to full-time campus ministry. He left us in December 1989 to serve in that capacity at Gardner-Webb University.



Burdette Robinson (Burdette Robinson)

Lynwood Walters began with us in July 1990. Lynwood was born in Georgia and educated at Furman and Southeastern Seminary. He had been ordained in 1971 and held some associate positions elsewhere. He wrote a column for the newsletter, *First Baptist News*, which he signed "Mr. Ed." ("Mr. Ed" is for Education. It has nothing to do with a talking horse.) Lynwood resigned in April 1994—meaning we lost pastor and associate at about the same time—to accept the position of associate at FBC in Gainesville, Florida, where he stayed until 2005; but he left here with good memories. He singles out Sunday School weeks at Fort Caswell, filling a wagon with pennies for the Children's Home, his daughter Mandy going with the youth on a mission trip to New York City (an apartment ministry to children of LeFrak City, a complex of twenty-five thousand residents), his son Rob profiting from Boy Scout Troop 8, the formation of the CBF during his years here, and Wilson barbecue. And he hasn't forgotten Garland Ricks getting in the pulpit and imitating him, clad in a black robe with a mop on his head. He enjoyed his

^{7.} For those below a certain age and readers in the future, *Mr. Ed* was a television comedy series in the 1960s that featured a talking horse called Mr. Ed. Back then people thought that was real comedy.

Brenda and Lynwood Walters (Photo by Christine Taylor)



collegial work with Ray Beale and Clyde Patterson and grieved with many of the rest of us over Jim Jarrard's resignation.

While he was at FBC Gainesville he received an endorsement as a chaplain by the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship and then took his current position as full-time chaplain with Haven Hospice of North Central Florida, living and working in Gainesville. Now a Methodist, he has been through the two-year Academy of Spiritual Formation sponsored by Upper Room Ministries and has now begun a similar program with Audire Spiritual Direction School at the San Pedro Catholic Center in Winter Park.

Our new associate pastor was Mike Hamilton, who came in June 1996 from his position as chaplain at Wingate University. He was a good singer and occasionally would break forth into song while preaching. He left us in August 1997.

Tom Riley came our way as associate pastor on August 9, 1998. Tom is a graduate of Samford University. He began seminary at Golden Gate in California, but finished at Duke Divinity School. Before Wilson, he had served in internships and associate positions at Wake Forest Baptist Church and Dunwoody Baptist in Dunwoody, Georgia. Tom was attracted to FBC Wilson because it would afford him the opportunity to work with all age groups and with diverse ministries, like the After School Program, the Scouts, and the Hispanic mission. Tom had grown up in Atlanta and was surprised and pleased to find our congregation so "connected," having extensive family ties locally but receptive to newcomers. He thinks of the Barnabas Ministry (chapter 33) as his best accomplishment. Few people knew all that the ministry was doing, but for him the quietness of it added to the charm. He describes his role in it as getting out of the way and letting the Spirit move.

What had the greatest impact on Tom's life was something totally unexpected. Through the After School Program he came to know two of the boys

especially well, Tyrone and Marquell Harring. When they could no longer live with their grandmother, he had them move in with him, and in Tom's home they grew into young men. They became involved in several church activities like the RAs, the Scouts, and the Youth Group. For several years, the three of them were up at four-thirty on Easter morning to get set up for the sunrise service. Even after Tom left us to teach at Wake Community College, many of us continued to follow his "boys" with interest and concern.

Steve Clayton is our current associate pastor. His background is unique. He graduated from NCSU with a degree in soil science and agronomy and came to Wilson as environmental health supervisor with the Health Department. From 1989 to 1991 he was in Raleigh with the North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources, then returned to Wilson to be director of Solid Waste Management with Wilson County. Steve was active in FBC from his first days here, over twenty-five years ago, and as time went on began to feel that the ministry was a profession he could pursue and was called for. He began part-time study at Campbell University Divinity School, and graduated. FBC was fortunate to be able to take Steve on as part-time associate while he continued his work with the county.

Now it can be revealed: when Doug and Candy Murray first visited FBC here to have a meeting with a few church leaders, Steve Clayton came in with his wife Alice, and his face broke into a big grin. Candy started laughing. Doug stood there puzzled. Steve and Candy had once dated while at NCSU.

It's well known that secretaries run the nation's business. They have a



Steve Clayton (FBC)



Tom Riley (Photo by Lou Craig)



Sally Boswell and Mildred Grissom. The quilt was made by the women of the church (chapter 33), bought by Ray Baker at the Christmas auction, and given to the church. (Photo by author)

lot to do with keeping churches running smoothly, too. We observed Mrs. Lottie Collins's work with Mr. Baucom in chapters 22 and 23. No history of FBC could overlook the dynamic duo who served mostly during Mr. Bussey's years, Mildred Grissom and Sally Boswell. Mildred worked for Mr. Baucom from 1954 to 1958, when her twin girls were born. She returned to work in 1960 during the Baucom-Bussey interim, then stayed on under Mr. Bussey until she retired in 1985. Sally began her long stint as financial secretary in May 1965, and laid down her double duties as financial secretary and church hostess in June 1991. Others have come and gone, and we can't name them all, but it would really be unkind not to mention Tammy Jones, who brightened the outer office with her sunny disposition until someone made her an offer she just couldn't refuse; or Ann Bondley, who has kept our finances straight from 1998 right up till now; or Janice Gay, our unflappable Administrative Secretary.

Chapter 29

Makers of Song

All the congregation worshiped, and the singers sang.
—2 CHRONICLES 29:28 KJV

REMEMBER THOSE OLD-TIME HYMNS we old-timers grew up with in church? "Power in the Blood," "Pass Me Not, O Gentle Savior," "My Jesus II Love Thee," "I Will Sing the Wondrous Story," "All the Way My Savior Leads Me." Then, too, "Where He Leads Me I Will Follow," "Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus," "The Old Rugged Cross," "Have Thine Own Way, Lord," "I Love to Tell the Story," "By and By, When the Morning Comes"? The folks who got together in 1860 to form Wilson Baptist Church never sang those songs. Never heard them. They hadn't been written yet. Most of the hymns they sang would be unfamiliar to us, and we wouldn't particularly like them. Many were concerned with death and the future life to a point we would consider morbid.

We would have known some of the old Anglican hymns, like those of Isaac Watts: "Alas, and Did My Savior Bleed," "Am I a Soldier of the Cross," or "Jesus Shall Reign Where'er the Sun." And we'd have been familiar with some of the newer Wesleyan hymns: "Father, I Stretch My Hands to Thee," "Lo, He Comes with Clouds Descending," or "O For a Thousand Tongues to Sing." Back in 1860 we knew the poem "Amazing Grace," but when we heard it sung, it may not always have been to the tune NEW BRITAIN, which it eventually glommed onto and to which it is almost always sung today. The earliest hymnals did not have music printed, only the words. But they might have an indication as to what tunes they could be sung to. Baptists were rather slow

coming around to the use of musical instruments for worship services, but by 1860 most of our people would have had no problem with that. The problem was we didn't have an instrument, and wouldn't have until we bought that reed organ in the 1880s. Probably had no hymnals, either. The solution to this was for someone, the preacher or a deacon usually, to stand in front of the congregation and "line out" the hymns. He'd call out the words, line by line, and the people would sing each line as he gave it to them. They were sort of expected to know the tunes. Sometimes this was called "deaconing out" the hymns. Our early records refer once to "giving out" the hymns. The singing was done at a slow tempo. You can hear a bit of this kind of singing at http://video.aol.com/video-detail/old-regular-baptist-church-when-we-shall-meet/2836518626.²

In parts of the South, mostly from our mountains westward, there developed in the eighteenth century a method of singing from printed music with shaped notes, where each of four shapes represented a different tone (mi, fa, sol, la). Whole hymnals were published for this. One, *The Sacred Harp*, has given its name to this whole type of singing. It can be slow and stately, or quick and lively, but is always sung bravely, with a chain-saw quality to it and no regard for dynamic subtlety. It's mostly museum music today, an acquired taste, with aficionados getting together to sing it for fun, but in parts of Alabama and Georgia it's still a living tradition. All of that is simply to say that while this was an important movement among Baptists and others in the South, there seems to be no evidence that Sacred Harp songcraft ever took root in eastern North Carolina. Dr. Hooper's personal hymnbook presented the tunes in the traditional notation that we know today. Most of our people were educated, and if they read music, could read it that way. A good documentary on Sacred Harp singing is available at www.folkstreams. net/film,44. Be warned: it's an acquired taste, and you may not like this oldtime Baptist music.

Our first Music Committee was appointed by Brother Carter in 1880, and it appears to have been active ever since. We seem to have gone out of our way to have good music in church, and when we got to the point that we could put some money into a music program, whether for organist, choir director, or sheet music, we did it. From time to time local newspapers mentioned musical events at Wilson Baptist. From 1892 we have this description of the singing of one of our members: "The admirable and finely equipped choir at the Baptist church gave us some exquisite music on Sunday. The

^{1.} Needham Bryan Cobb's autobiography, p. 41, uses this term.

^{2.} My thanks to David M. Music for finding this for me. If the link doesn't work, try Googling "regular Baptist" and "YouTube." It is from a 1996 album from Smithsonian Folkways, "When We Shall Meet: Mountain Music of Kentucky."

magnificent basso voice of Robert Physioc was very rich, and sonorous, and mellow, and some of his swelling notes sounded like the mellow undertone of the thundering organ of the deep, when the winds, which played upon its octaves, are lifted and gone." That last bit doesn't make a lot of sense, but the editor of the Mirror wrote in a florid style and didn't always know how to stop. Mr. Physioc was a tailor employed by the Gay department store. He was a member of Wilson Baptist, but left for Baltimore in December 1892. Choirs enjoy social events, and this was true long ago, too. On a Friday night in July 1896, there was a little party after choir practice with Pastor and Mrs. Rood, joined by Mrs. Sallie Harrison, serving cake and lemon sherbet. 4 Don Hinshaw would later develop the choir social into a minor extravaganza. On Friday, February 24, 1898, the choir presented a "sacred concert" for the general public. No admission, but the newspaper assured folks they would have an opportunity to contribute what they saw fit.⁵ The roster of officers for the year 1906 lists an organist and assistant organist for both the church and the Sunday School.

By 1918 someone, probably a lady in the church, was conducting a Junior Choir, which is mentioned in the church records of February 20. On January 22, 1920, we hosted an organ recital by Prof. L. B. Brabec of Atlantic Christian College, who brought a quartet along to sing with him.⁶ In 1921 our choir was undertaking something more ambitious than hymns. On March 27, the choir presented a cantata, "The Story of Calvary," in the morning and performed Gounod's "Send Out the Light" at the evening service. There was a Christmas cantata, "The Manger Prince," on December 18, 1921.⁷ We were serious singers by this time. The choir director at the time appears to have been Lucille Magette, a member and a local music teacher. In 1928, during the Bagby pastorate, there is mention of a Boys' Choir in the records.

We had a visitor on Sunday, September 2, 1934, while Dr. Ellis was pastor. This was John Biggs "Pat" Alderman, a music teacher at the Baptist orphanage in Kinston. He recommended that we hire as choral leader J. Alton Hampton, who was coming to Wilson with the North Carolina Music Association. We liked the idea and thought we could afford to pay him five hundred dollars for a year's service. He was immediately available. In Sat-

- 3. Wilson Mirror, April 13, 1892.
- 4. Wilson Advance, July 30, 1896.
- 5. Wilson Advance, February 24, 1898.
- 6. Daily Times, January 22, 1920.
- 7. Isaac Morton Mercer ledger, Mercer Papers, WFU.
- 8. Alderman was an interesting man. He had been around the state doing evangelistic music since age fourteen. He got a degree from what at the time was Baptist Bible School in New Orleans, then a master's in music from the Chicago Conservatory. During the Great Depression he was lucky to find a job at the orphanage (Ken-

urday's paper there was a special note in the usual weekly notice of church news: "Mr. Alton Hampton is in charge of the music." And for the evening service: "Mr. Alton Hampton will be in charge of the music and will stress congregational singing. If you enjoy singing and want to know how to do it better, come and sit with us." In the October 30 issue, we advertise that Mr. J. Alton Hampton is "Minister of Music," with Mrs. B. B. Plyler as organist. He may have been responsible for putting the choir in robes for the first time, in April 1935. Mr. and Mrs. Hampton joined the church October 9. Hampton apparently did not stay long, and we made no attempt to replace him.

The Baptist Hymnal for Church and Home, published by the American Baptist Publication Society in Philadelphia, may have been the first hymnal we actually bought for the church. It was first published in 1883 and would have contained some new music, like some of the titles mentioned above. It went through several editions; there was a new one in 1905. The Modern Priscillas (chapter 16) bought hymnals for the church in 1905, and this may have been the one they bought. We know we were using this hymnbook in 1913, since the hymn numbers given in a bulletin from that year match those of this hymnal. It had probably been in use for some time earlier. This was by far and away and most popular hymnbook among Baptist churches at the time, North and South, black and white. The splendidly named David Music and his coauthor Paul Richardson, in their survey of Baptist hymnody, call it "the most enduring hymnal ever produced by Baptists." The Sunday School Board of the SBC had published *The Baptist Hymn and Praise Book* in 1904. It saw wide use, but apparently we never had it in our pew racks.

The Sunday School had its own hymnbook, probably paper-bound. In some of Dr. Mercer's notes, he will designate a hymn by two numbers, one for the main hymnal and one for the Sunday School hymnal. At that time both books were probably in the pews, with the Sunday School songs seldom used in worship services. There were probably separate songbooks for younger children. Sunday School songs, as well as gospel songs, began to appear in the late part of the nineteenth century, largely an outgrowth of the revivalist movement. Traveling evangelists would usually be accompanied by a song leader, and a whole body of songs were written for these occasions. Some of them eventually found their way into hymnals. They were

nedy Home) in Kinston. He worked in the shipyards during the war, then moved to East Tennessee, where he wrote novels, plays, and music about mountain culture. After retirement from a local high school there, he got interested in conservation, became a naturalist with the Forest Service, and wrote about that kind of thing. All I can find out about Mr. Hampton is that he was band director at a high school in Vinton, VA, in 1939–1940.

^{9.} WDT, October 6, 1934.

^{10.} Music, "I Will Sing the Wondrous Story," 278-381.

influenced by the popular music of the day, with lively, bouncy tunes, such as "When We All Get to Heaven," "Count Your Blessings," "Send the Light," or "Standing on the Promises." Those snappy songs might have gone well with Mr. Blanchard's snappy sermons. One of their characteristics was a refrain or chorus, something standard hymns seldom had. In fact, during this period, refrains were often added to old hymns, and some stuck. The version of "On Jordan's Stormy Banks" that we have in our hymnals consists of an old eighteenth-century hymn, with a refrain added in the late nineteenth.

In 1923, at Dr. Mercer's request, we bought 150 copies of a hymnbook called *Kingdom Songs*. There were several hymnals by that name, but the one intended is surely the one edited by Robert H. Coleman and I. E. Reynolds, published by the Sunday School Board of the SBC in 1921: *Kingdom Songs: The Choicest Hymns and Gospel Songs of All the Earth, for General Use in Church Services, Sunday Schools, and Young People's Meetings*. Another we owned at one time was *Harkness Gospel Songs, with Standard Hymns*, published by Harkness Music Company in California. When we moved into the new church, we may have been among the first to order the new *Songs for Juniors*, a hardback Sunday School songbook published by Broadman Press. Bobbie Warenda still owns a copy and remembers no. 84, "Building, Daily Building," as a song they often sang in the Junior Department.

When we moved into the new church in 1952, we had a brand-new hymnal in the racks. This was Christian Worship: A Hymnal, which was published jointly by the American Baptist Convention and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Almost certainly it was Pastor Baucom's choice. It was used at First Christian as well as in Howard Chapel at ACC, and our members would have become familiar with it during our brief exile there while repairs were being made to the condemned sanctuary at Pine and Nash. It was certainly an unusual choice for a Southern Baptist church. At the time The Broadman Hymnal was used almost universally in Southern Baptist churches; by one description, this was "essentially a large gospel songbook with an assortment of standard hymns."12 We apparently never did use it. This probably did not make us unique among Southern Baptist churches, but almost so. From the 1930s into the 1950s, if you were a Southern Baptist, you sang from *The Broadman Hymnal* in your pew rack, and you could find "Just as I Am" in the hymnal (no. 162) as quickly as you could find Psalm 23 in the Bible. Christian Worship was a bigger book, and much more in the tradition of standard Protestant hymnody.

By the time Clyde Patterson came as our minister of music in 1970, we were using the *Baptist Hymnal* of 1956, which we had purchased a few years

^{11.} A copy is in the possession of Jerry Owens.

^{12.} David M. Music and Paul Richardson, I Will Sing the Wondrous Story, 423.

after Mr. Bussey came. When the Sunday School Board of the SBC published another *Baptist Hymnal* in 1975, we bought copies of it for the senior adult area. Although it bore the same title as the 1956 hymnal, it was quite different, reflecting cultural trends of the 1970s. Many new musicals were being written for young people in a popular style. An interest in folk music prompted the resurrection of a good many old American tunes, and a new awareness of diverse ethnicities gave rise to the inclusion of some numbers from various cultures, especially the black spirituals. The editor, William J. Reynolds, used music from these sources in the new hymnbook, as well as new hymns written by Southern Baptists, including a good number of his own composition. It was not a resounding success. Much of the new music proved transient. The Sunday School Board published a new Baptist Hymnal in 1991. (It has 666 numbered items. I suspect a practical joker.) The most enduring of the new music introduced in 1975 was included, but it took a more traditional format and sought content from other rich traditions. It has been highly successful, and we replaced our 1956 hymnals with this one soon after it was released.

Our earliest instrument was probably a reed organ bought in 1884. To hear what it may have sounded like, go to the Estey site at http://eccs.onu. edu/~estell/organs/152172/152172.html. Reed organs, or parlor organs, were used more than pianos in churches such as ours largely for practical reasons. They traveled better on rugged railroad trips than pianos did, and they kept their tune better. They were basically simpler machines. Many were sold for home use. The pipe organ that was installed in the auditorium, as we called it, at Pine and Nash was probably a Kimball. In 1918 we paid the Estey Organ Works in Brattleboro, Vermont, \$18.23 for repairs, but that was probably for the reed organ. In 1919 we placed an order with the Kimball Company in Chicago for repairs. 13 (The Estey Web site has a long but incomplete list of their organs. Ours is not on the list, but it does tell us that First Presbyterian had them install an organ in 1911.) Whichever it was, when rebuilt, it was moved to the new church in 1952. By 1965 so many problems had developed with it that after an intensive study, all authorities consulted agreed that it would not be practical to restore it, and we decided to build and install a completely new instrument.

David C. Scribner of Little Rock is a student of Kimball organs and has found record of a Kimball model at our church. It was a tubular-pneumatic

^{13.} W. B. Millner of W. W. Kimball Co. to Rev. I. M. Mercer, Chicago, October 7, 1919, Mercer Papers, WFU. This letter is preserved by accident. It was kept not for its content but because Dr. Mercer had scribbled sermon notes on it. When ideas struck him, he apparently grabbed any scrap of paper he could find to jot notes on. Often the paper he happened to use is far more interesting than his notes.

organ, a two-manual and -pedal model "dating somewhere around 1894." The year 1894 is the year we entered the Pine Street sanctuary adjoining the parsonage, but a photograph of its interior shows what appears to be a reed organ underneath the arch in the choir area. Perhaps the Kimball was installed in 1907. The history of our organs needs further research, but it involves technical knowledge beyond my competence.

In 1947 we hired our first full-time minister of music, and she began her work Sunday, August 31. This was Bruce Ellen O'Quinn. She grew up in a small town in Arkansas not far from Memphis and, because her talents were recognized by the right person, attended and graduated from Westminster Choir College in Princeton, New Jersey. While a student there she was one of a group of Westminster musicians who spent the summers working on Roanoke Island with The Lost Colony. She knew Andy Griffith while he was there. To have something to do during the day, she took flying lessons. That came to an end one very windy day when her little plane came down hard and crashed into a building. FBC here was her first real job. She was nineteen and tried to act older. She got a number of choirs organized and functioning (including one or two in town), and thoroughly enjoyed her time here. She lived in a boarding house on Nash a few blocks from the church and walked home after choir rehearsals. She was thrilled when the Ford dealer offered to sell her a new Ford coupe. Cars were still hard to get then, so soon after the war. Brucie (as she is generally known) had a little trouble with Mr. Baucom, who could be controlling. The Baucoms had no children, and took to Brucie. They often insisted she have dinner with them on Sundays, which she appreciated, but she really wanted to spend some time with people her own age.

Things seemed to be going well until Mr. Baucom called her into his office one day and told her she was breaking up his marriage. What?! Mrs. Baucom was upset because Miss O'Quinn did not accept every invitation and was offended that she did not spend all her free time with them. She replied that she liked the pastor and his wife, but she was hired to be minister of music, not their companion, and she wanted to visit with the choir members and some of her own friends. Brucie told her parents about this, and they came to Wilson to visit. The Baucoms were cold to them and began to snub Miss O'Quinn. Baucom also gave her a hard time when revivals came because she just couldn't quite get into the swing of the revival spirit he wanted. Well, her father had a serious heart attack, her mother wanted her at home, and the pastor made her feel uncomfortable, so she left us in June 1949 and went

^{14.} I had a colleague at ACC who once drove a student down to FBC for some reason and, while there, went to the men's room a couple of doors down from the pastor's study. Mr. Baucom came in and asked him, "Are you a Baptist?" "No," my friend replied. "Do you have a separate room for us?"



Bruce Ellen O'Quinn (Bruce O. Woods)

back home to Arkansas. At that time James I. Miller chaired the Music Committee. Mr. Baucom complained to him about her leaving, and Miller told him that she'd still be there if he hadn't treated her the way he did. Brucie married Harold L. Woods, a professional educator, in 1950. Her husband died in 1993, but she has continued an active, adventurous life, traveling and doing music and other good deeds. She's now a volunteer, playing piano for the restaurant at the Southeast Missouri Hospital in Cape Girardeau, where she lives, happily looking back on a life she has enjoyed living.15

After Miss O'Quinn left we got by as we always had, with local volunteer or

semi-professional help, until 1958, when a serious search got under way for a full-time minister of music. One man to whom the job was offered turned us down for three reasons. First, the division of the choir into two facing sections across the divided chancel. This fellow put great emphasis on contact with the choir he directed by hands, facial expressions, and eye contact, and did not feel his style of conducting would work well with our architecture, even with mirrors. Second, he thought it "imperative" to use a Southern Baptist hymnal so that he could follow the monthly suggestions from the Sunday School Board. Third, he wanted to be able to stand in front of the congregation and conduct their singing, and Mr. Baucom seemed to have some doubt that this would go over very well with our congregation. It was expected during revival meetings, but it had never been done in worship services. 17

We found the person we wanted down in New Orleans. This was Donald G. Hinshaw, a native Tar Heel born on a tobacco farm in Boonville in 1934. He was a graduate of Davidson College and was about to receive his master of sacred music degree from the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary

^{15.} My thanks to Mrs. Woods herself for this information, received during a long, delightful telephone call and subsequent e-mails.

^{16.} Ironically, many Southern Baptists would decry the pastor's preaching from texts in a prescribed lectionary but had no problem with dicta from the Sunday School Board in other matters.

^{17.} Paul Tadlock to Dear Brother Baucom, Dothan, AL, March 26, 1958, Baucom Papers, WFU.

when Mr. Baucom telephoned him one morning. The two of them seem to have hit it off splendidly. Don (as he came to be known) wrote Mr. Baucom a letter that afternoon in which he expressed gratitude that he found a pastor who shared some of his "different ideas about Church Music," "I feel that the Church has an opportunity to use the finest and best in a worship service when they understand what is the best and that is our job to present the best in the best way. I also feel that it is a process of education and final results are not gained overnight."18 Don wanted to direct a program of high-quality church music; he realized that it would probably take time and effort to develop but that he would find satisfaction in the



Don Hinshaw (Clifford Poole)

challenge. That's exactly what Mr. Baucom wanted. That much was indicated by his choice of *Christian Worship* as our hymnal in 1952. While a student, Don had been minister of music at FBC in Bay St. Louis, Mississippi, and at Elysian Fields Baptist Church in New Orleans. He also said that he did "a bit of dabbling in composition." That was rather modest. While here at FBC, he composed a fair number of pieces, which our choirs performed.

Don was a fine organist and did the best he could with the inadequate instrument we had; we used him as a consultant when the new organ was being designed. He developed a fine graded choir program, and the choirs loved to sing under his creative direction. In 1961 he started a handbell choir, one of the first in the state. The church put out \$678.43 for a set of Petit and Fritzen bells. That showed our confidence in him. He began the custom of an annual banquet for the choir, with entertainment developed around a theme. He was active in the musical life of the college as well as the city. Under his conducting the choir performed most of the finer cantatas in the choral repertoire, and in 1960 he hired six musicians from East Carolina College to accompany a performance of *Messiah*. Orchestral accompaniment was a first for Wilson. On December 12, 1964, the choir performed a cantata of Don's own composition, "New Born Is He." Mr. Hinshaw provided some introduction in the December 2 newsletter:

^{18.} Donald Hinshaw to Clyde Baucom, May 13, 1958, Clyde Espy Baucom Papers, PCMS 245, WFU.

The style of the composition is contemporary and utilizes sounds to create an effect of introspective and thoughtful reflection upon the events of the Nativity. Much of the writing is symbolic in that certain theological concepts are incorporated into the music. For example, the first chorus, "Gloria," is an expression of praise to God as Creator, the omnipotent, the source of being. It is a call for all mankind to join in a chorus of praise.

The words have been carefully selected and adapted from medieval mystery plays, the Scripture, and the composer's own writings. Careful study as to the theological and doctrinal appropriateness of the words has been given. It is an attempt to tell an old and beautiful story in a new and fresh manner.

The soloists were Jennie Lee from FBC and Jim Cobb and Ross Albert from ACC. A brass trio and percussion instruments were part of the accompaniment. This was Don's going-away present to the church. It was "written in Praise of Almighty God and dedicated with love and gratitude to the Sanctuary Choir and the congregation of First Baptist Church." Hinshaw wasn't quite done, though. On December 23 he put on a presentation of Menotti's operetta "Amahl and the Night Visitors."

At the end of 1964 Don left us to go into the business world, working for Liggett & Myers in Durham, and later for a couple of years for a tobacco company in Manila. He couldn't keep away from music, though, and in 1968 he was in New York City as choral editor for Carl Fischer, Inc., a major music publisher. He stayed there through June 1975, when he returned to North Carolina and established his own music publishing firms: Hinshaw Music, Hindon Publications, and Chapel Hill Music. As president and CEO of these outfits he traveled the world over giving choral music workshops. Don died suddenly on December 30, 1996, while on vacation in Mexico. The famed English composer John Rutter came over and led a performance of his well-known *Requiem* in Don's honor at Duke Chapel. Hinshaw Music, along with Oxford University Press, is Rutter's publisher. In 2008 Palm Beach Atlantic University dedicated their Don Hinshaw Choral Library in his memory. Don's honor with the composer of the property of the second support of the property o

Robert F. Sutter began his work with us February 1, 1965. He was born and raised in northern Kentucky (greater Cincinnati), graduated from the College Conservatory of Music in Cincinnati, and received his master of sacred music degree from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville in

^{19.} The only time I had the pleasure of meeting Don was at one of these workshops at the American Baptist Assembly in Green Lake, WI, in 1971.

^{20.} My thanks to Don's business partner, Clifford Poole, for much of this information.

1961. Before coming to us he served as minister of music and organist at the Oxford Baptist Church of Oxford, North Carolina, and at FBC of Mt. Airy. The Sutters' second child was born on a Sunday morning while Bob was at the organ. All the expectant father could do back then was pace in a waiting room, so he did his waiting at his post of duty. After the service he went immediately to the hospital, and the baby had already arrived. The nurses wondered if Mrs. Sutter had a husband.

Bob writes that he has many pleasant memories of Wilson and that working with Bill Bussey was a pleasure. Of the musical performances he conducted, the one he remembers most was the Christmas Oratorio of Camille Saint-Saëns. It was an honor for us when Bob Sutter was the organist in residence for Music Week at Ridgecrest one summer. Sutter left us on October 15, 1967, for FBC of Deland, Florida. He then served at FBC of Florence and FBC of Gaffney in South Carolina. In May 1994 he went to First Presbyterian of Danville, Virginia, and he retired there in 1996. His message to FBC here is "Wilson was one of the nicest places I have ever been." 21

After Ross Albert from ACC filled in a few months, Betty Miller became our minister of music on January 5, 1968. Betty was a memorable character but didn't stay long, only until June 1, 1969, when she took a position with Blackwell Memorial Baptist Church in Elizabeth City. She married John Walker, a dance instructor, and moved to Elon, where he opened a dance studio and she taught piano. They lived above an old grocery store, with the studio on the first floor. They maintained a fabulous garden around the property. Betty was secretary for Burlington Day School for many years and was active in the Alamance Chorale. She and her husband had an amicable separation, and Betty now lives in a retirement home in Elon.

On November 23, 1969, we had the dedicatory concert of the magnificent new fifty-rank Reuter pipe organ we had been looking forward to hearing. It was designed by Bob Sutter of our own church and H. Max Smith of Appalachian State University, a well-known and respected organist in North Carolina, in consultation with Don Hinshaw. Betty Miller suggested some minor changes that were rejected, but Clyde Patterson says it would have been a bit better organ if they had been made. Dr. Smith performed the concert, and a memorable occasion it was.

Hinshaw and Sutter had pretty well established a permanent position on the staff of this large and growing church, so we knew we had to start looking for our next minister of music. Local talent filled in for a few months. Early in the search we contacted Clyde Patterson, minister of music at Madison Avenue Baptist in Goldsboro, but since he had not been there long, he didn't even respond. While our Reuter organ was being built in the fall of 1969, Pat-

^{21.} E-mail from Robert Sutter, January 21, 2009.

Clyde Patterson (Photo by author)



terson came up to investigate and talk to the Reuter people, since his church was giving thought to building one. He was impressed, and in October he returned for a further inspection. It happened that Jennie Lee dropped into the office the same day, and when she learned that Clyde Patterson was at that moment in the church, up in the organ chamber admiring the Reuter workmanship, Jennie went right up there. She twisted his arm, but it didn't take much twisting. Clyde really liked that organ, and he readily admits that the organ is the main reason he came to Wilson. He started his work here on January 2, 1970, and would remain in that position for thirty-two years. No one has ever been in the employ of the church longer.

Clyde was born in Siler City on August 25, 1937. His college years were spent at the Sherwood Music School in Chicago, where he met his wife Dorothy. He graduated with a master of music degree from Westminster Choir College in 1961, majoring in organ. Before going to Goldsboro, he served as minister of music at FBC of Kernersville for three years and at FBC of Greenville, Mississippi, for another three. Thence to Goldsboro and on to Wilson. Clyde recalls that one of the boys in his children's choir was little Rick Pridgen. Rick, all grown up and a big, tall man, later was a member at FBC here and worked for a season with the youth program. He's now a deacon back at FBC Goldsboro.

Clyde found that Hinshaw and Sutter had left the choir programs in good shape. He had a lot to work with. He conducted the Sanctuary Choir, of course, but also choirs for young people and older children. He usually had help with the younger children—Carolyn Weller and Cyndi Bachara Broadwater pitched in—but he himself never directed a preschool choir. At one time he had four handbell choirs going, for adults, young people, senior adults, and children. At Carolyn Hill's suggestion, he began a choir for senior adults, people involved in no other choir activity. This became a favorite activity for many. They performed in nursing homes, in other churches, and frequently here at FBC.

For a minister of music, the year consists of four seasons: preparing for

Christmas, Christmas, preparing for Easter, and Easter. Of course there are regular Sunday anthems to be rehearsed and performed, but a lot of time is devoted to planning the special musical programs usually featured at those high points of the Christian year. Over the years Clyde conducted the usual standards, like "The Seven Last Words of Christ," by Dubois, and "The Crucifixion," by Stainer. At the appropriate seasons, he presented several performances of portions of Handel's Messiah. That's difficult music, but he had enough confidence in his own abilities and those of our choirs to take it on. He presented Fauré's well-known *Requiem*, as well as Schubert's less familiar Mass in G and Mendelssohn's St. Paul. A lot of musicals for youth choirs were being written during these years by composers such as Buryl Red, and Clyde mounted two or three dozen of these productions, such as Red's "Celebrate Life." On one occasion we joined with the youth choirs of three other downtown churches in a presentation of Red's "Beginning." Clyde once directed "Music Builds a Dream," a benefit concert for the construction of our first Habitat for Humanity House. It used high-octane local talent, and admission cost twelve dollars.

Patterson and Bussey made a good team. Patterson selected the hymns, sometimes with suggestions from the pastor, but the pastor never told the minister of music how to do his job. On Sunday evenings we would often be treated to a small organ recital in place of the regular vespers service. Once we even had a double concert, with Clyde on the Reuter and Dorothy on a rented Allen electronic organ. Dorothy herself was organist and choir director at Ascension Lutheran Church in Wilson for thirty years, 1970–2000.

Clyde was a member of Singing Churchmen, a men's group that performed here and there around the state. They sang here May 5, 1980. Like Hinshaw before him, Clyde "dabbled" in composition and would often perform some piece he himself had written, often variations on a hymn tune. He composed two original pieces for handbells that were performed at area festivals. The congregation would have to be paying close attention to the bulletin to know that, since Clyde didn't advertise his own talents. It seems like there was always a choir on the way to a festival of some kind somewhere. (Church musicians enjoy this sort of thing.) The youth handbell choir performed at ten or more national festivals of American Guild of English Handbell Ringers, at times with 1,500 or more ringers involved, as well as Baptist state handbell festivals. Clyde revamped the entire handbell program with the purchase of a three-octave set of Schulmerich bells, later expanded to a five-octave set. The bells Don Hinshaw had bought were musically outdated. Handbell music had gone in new directions since then; a different playing technique was required, and a different sound was produced. He also supervised the installation of a new organ console in 1999, and held a dedicatory concert of the refurbished instrument on September 16, 2001.



Janie Griffin (United Way of Wilson County, © Raines & Cox)

Clyde once staged a musical version of Tolstoy's Christmas story about a poor cobbler. Jennie Lee played the cobbler's wife. Some suggested that it would look more realistic if she would muss up her hair, but she refused: "No reason why a cobbler's wife couldn't have her hair in place."

One of our longtime every-Sunday members was Janie Griffin, a lady of some means and of demanding taste. She had a special interest in the music program of the church, and became close to Clyde. For years they met regularly for coffee every week at a certain time. Janie anonymously donated the grand piano that was in the fellowship hall, now in the senior adult area. When

it first came, Clyde made sure everyone knew how to treat the instrument—with respect and care. Janie also provided much of the wherewithal for the repairs and upkeep of the organ and underwrote a lot of the expense when it was thoroughly reworked in 1999–2001. Janie always sat very near the front of the church. She did not like to hear loud organ music, so Clyde always warned her when the solo trumpet setting was coming.

One Sunday in April 1973 a transformer blew in the middle of the doxology. Clyde was stymied and helpless on the bench, but Mr. Felton and Mr. Wooten soon ran up to the chambers and connected the organ to the power supply for the old organ. In November 1982 a carillon was installed, playable from the organ console. It consists of thirty-seven notes of Flemish bell sounds and thirty-seven harp-celesta bells. Several people made special donations toward this. The fund was begun in 1975, partially in memory of Thurston Lowe, long a faithful choir member. In 1976 Clyde built a harpsichord from a kit and gave some delightful performances on it. He later sold it. That's too bad.

Both Clyde and Dorothy participated in some of the productions of the local Shoestring Theater and Playhouse productions. Over the years Clyde made friends with just about everyone in the church. The choir always remembered him on his birthday, and several times the church threw big bashes in his honor, particular on the occasion of his retirement on May 26, 2002, which we proclaimed Clyde Patterson Day. It takes nothing away from his abilities as a choir director to point out that he is a masterful organist and has a silken touch on the piano. We are complimented that he never even

thought about leaving us for another position. As he puts it, he found the perfect fit, pretty much as Bill Bussey did, and made a satisfying career for himself right here, for which we are grateful. Everyone liked Clyde, and that meant that whoever followed him was going to have a tough time. It would be like a new pastor stepping into a spot filled for decades by a much-loved pastor. Clyde has continued to play for weddings and funerals when asked, much as Mr. Bussey is still asked to participate in funerals. He often receives moving notes of appreciation from the families.

Like pastors, ministers of music often have disciples, young people who learn from them and are influenced by them into music ministry careers of their own. One of Clyde's has been Lin Bratcher, a son of our church who was later ordained to the Baptist ministry and has gone on to a sterling career in church music. He has served as such at First Christian in Wilson and First United Methodist in Smithfield, as well as other places. He is now music minister at All Saints Episcopal Church in Concord. His choir has had the privilege of presenting a concert at Washington Cathedral. You have to be good for that.

Mary-Mitchell Campbell is another of Clyde's people, though he claims no credit for her accomplishments. Daughter of Johnnie Faye Campbell, she is a successful orchestrator, music director, and pianist who has worked with many Broadway productions and is one of the youngest ever to serve on the faculty of the Julliard School. She is the founder of Artists Striving to End Poverty, a group devoted to alleviating poverty by introducing children in deprived environments to the riches of the arts and connecting them with artists wishing to share their gifts. She conceived the idea while working as a volunteer at Mother Teresa's mission in India. FBC is proud of any part we may have played in her professional and charitable success.

While we sought a permanent replacement for Clyde, we had excellent interim leadership provided by Paul Smith, retired minister of music at FBC Raleigh. We publicized the opening, and one day while at Meredith for an organ lesson, one Rita Bennett saw a posting on a bulletin board and yanked it off.

Rita is a native of Huntingdon, West Virginia, but grew up just across the river in the small town of South Point, Ohio. Few of us today can claim to have had the old-time Baptist experience that Rita experienced: "I professed Christianity as a ten-year-old on Easter Sunday morning in March 1967 and was baptized by immersion in the Mad Anthony Wayne River in April of that year. The water was tremendously cold, but my dad said no one ever got sick from being baptized!" The New Haven Missionary Baptist Church, into which she was baptized, is now "disbanded," as she describes it, "but not defunct in any eternal sense."

Ms. Bennett came to us with an impressive background: a baccalaure-



Rita Bennett (Photo by Ann Brna)

ate degree in music education from Marshall University in West Virginia, a master of music degree from Bowling Green State University in Ohio, and a master in church ministry from Duke Divinity School. While that was going on she got training on the side in jazz piano, a special interest and talent of hers. She had good recent professional experience as minister of music in several Methodist churches in the state, most recently in Nashville, North Carolina, where she was when we met her. Rita is a dazzling pianist. She also plays the organ, but she makes no claim to being an accomplished organist and was honest about that, so he personnel committee decided to hire Ms. Bennett

on as full-time minister of music and pay Clyde to serve as part-time organist. Some people thought this was not a smart idea. It worked well for a while.

Rita Bennett began work with us on Easter Sunday, April 11, 2004. She worked with several choirs, laboring over special musical events for each, especially of course the Sanctuary Choir. The choir worked hard for her. She was a demanding director and got good results. Occasionally a performance required a bit of choreography—she called for the choir or sections or individuals to move about during the presentation. This is trickier than it might seem, but she had a sense for it (plus some formal training in stagecraft). A youth performance of a musical drama called "Esther" was probably her best effort in that regard, but she compiled several Christmas and Easter cantatas as well. She did a lot of behind-the-scenes work in the organization of the choir room, its equipment, and its music library. That library grew as new anthems were added to the repertory of the choirs. She saw to it that all the instruments and the church's sound system were in good working order and added to those instruments a set of percussion instruments for the children's choirs and a grand piano for the choir rehearsal room, which she had professionally reconditioned for better acoustical effect. She gave a mission facet to her position by conducting benefit concerts for Hope Station, now a tradition that First United Methodist is continuing. She put her talent to work in the community as well, working with local theater at the Boykin Center. A highlight of this was the musical "Amazinggg Grace," which she wrote, produced, and directed. It was staged in January 2007, and every performance

was sold out. All this was in addition to being a single mother of two multitalented teenagers—no mean challenge. She is a live wire.

In the fall of 2008 Pastor Murray preached a series of sermons called "Getting Out of the Boat," based on the story in Matthew 14 of Jesus, walking on water, inviting Peter to get out of the boat and come to him. The point was that faith involves action, and taking some chances with God. Rita, a person of spiritual depth, thought this gave her an opportunity to break personally free from some conflict and ease some bad feelings in the church by formally getting out of the boat. She resigned her position on October 1, 2008. She had, and still has, many friends and supporters in the church who regretted her departure but who understood it. The church not only benefited from her ministry here but also learned some lessons from her departure. She continues to live in town, directing the Wilson Chorale, teaching music privately, and happily serving as minister of music/organist at Bethel United Methodist Church, where she is supervising the renovation of their 1963 Teller organ, and working in the public schools at Fike and at Farmville Central. We wish her well.

Until Rita Bennett was replaced, we made use of a number of people. Mike McKeown, an insurance agent in Wake Forest with seminary training, came over to direct the Sanctuary Choir. Sandy Baker Pittman volunteered with the Senior Choir, although she had recently resigned her paid position as minister of children. Sandy has experience of her own as church music director at several churches. She held that post for a while at First Christian here in Wilson. Mandy Sullivan, who has often been a help with the music program, took the children's choirs. Chuck Rakow, retired professor at Barton and retired organist at St. Timothy's, filled in at the organ for many months.

Kelley Garris had her first Sunday with us as our new minister of music on May 3, 2009. Ms. Garris is a Meredith College alumna, with a double

major in religion and music. She also sports a master of music degree in organ performance from the University of Kansas. Not many people in these parts can claim that. (Where is Kansas? Is that east or west of I-95?) For the past twenty-five years, she has been minister of music at FBC Smithfield, but her position there did not involve playing the organ. Here she can direct the choir and delight in playing this worthy instrument of ours at the same time. We're glad to have her.



Kelly Garris (Photo by Bruce Jackson)

Chapter 30

Organizations

We have many parts in the one body, and all these parts have different functions.

-ROMANS 12:4 TEV

SUNDAY SCHOOL

The first reference to a Sunday School in our records is from 1881, but it probably existed before that time. Missionary Baptists in North Carolina had even developed a literature for Sunday Schools, including *A Catechism for Little Children*, published in 1860. There's no record that we used it, but it's the kind of teaching that would have been done here. Anyone can read it at http://docsouth.unc.edu/imls/catechism/catechism.html.

Sunday School classes were held in the afternoon. Initially the Sunday School was for children only, but it had certainly expanded by 1890, when the *Wilson Mirror* ran an item about a program presenting gifts to certain Sunday School officers and "scholars." Two engraved silver cups were presented: one to Miss Bettie Drake, the superintendent, and Miss Cornelia Moye, who was nineteen. The editor writes: "The school is in the most efficient trim, equipped with most efficient corps of instructors and officers and supplied with full outfit of most approved Lesson Helps and a good Sunday School library of most choice literature for scholars and teachers. The song service is a specially delightful feature in the Sunday School management and here the voices of children blend with those of maturer years in praise."

1. Wilson Mirror, January 29, 1890.



Boethia class application (FBC)

By 1911 the Sunday School was well organized. It met Sunday morning before preaching, and had regular teachers' meetings. There was a Baraca class (chapter 16) for young men. There seems to have been, or maybe to have begun at this time, a Philathea class for young women. The Baraca-Philathea idea got started in upstate New York in the 1890s. Essentially it seems to have been a kind of Sunday School for young adults—Baraca for men, Philathea for women. It was an interdenominational affair that eventually developed its own national organization with branch offices in the states, rather like the YMCA. Baraca classes could be found in Methodist and Presbyterian churches as well. A good number of North Carolina Baptist churches of the time had Baraca and Philathea classes. They were a kind of cross between a Sunday School class and a college fraternity or sorority. You applied for membership, and the chapter paid dues to the national organization. Some even had their own yells. There were national and state conventions. In 1920 the North Carolina Baraca-Philathea organization held its convention in Wilson. There was a Baraca class at FBC as late as 1952, when the architects' plans for the new church marked out a Baraca classroom. By 1911 the church was beginning to implement some of the denominational programs sponsored by the SBC, but the Baraca-Philathea movement seems to have hung on quite a while independent of the Sunday School Board's graded programs. Various histories of the Sunday School among Southern Baptists never mention it as a prototype or competitor to the denominational program. Though it grew into an international organization, its strength was always on the Eastern seaboard, and it was here that it lasted longest.²

Boethia classes seem to have been the brainchild of Prof. W. J. Maclothlin of Southern Seminary in Louisville. The article in "Our Church Quarterly" for April 1911 (chapter 16) claims that ours was the first Boethia class in North Carolina. Its purpose apparently was to introduce Sunday School for adults, heretofore mostly for youngsters. "This class was organized May 3rd, 1910, with twelve members. It grew to number 116 within eleven months. Many of these grey-headed children are having their first real experience with Sunday School. They show a marvelous aptness for the work and will doubtless attain unto great strength as they grow older." That was of course tongue-in-cheek, since some of these folks were already up in years. The class motto was "We Do Things." They considered themselves a part of the Sunday School, but still "a complete organization within ourselves." It's interesting that the class consisted of both men and women.



Mattie Harrison Moss (Toby Moss)

Lots of people in the church remember the Sunday School teachers they had as youngsters. Ladies like Mrs. A. B. Carroll and Mrs. Creech, who would have her girls answer roll call by reciting a Bible verse. Everyone wanted "Jesus wept." Mrs. Creech would give some change to a girl in the class so that she could step next door to the Theater Soda Shop and bring back Cokes for the girls to sip during class. Mrs. Mattie Moss taught in the Beginners Department for decades, and even today she is remembered well by people who were very young when they knew her. Alec Flowers remembers his teachers, J. W. House and James Fitzgerald, Sr.

Edna Perry was a fixture as president of the Mercer Philathea class, taught by

Louise Austin. Mrs. Perry hosted many class meetings in her home. Herb Jeffries, manager of the Belk-Tyler store then across Nash Street from the church, taught a boys' class in the shoe department. Space was limited. In hot weather Howell Moss's boys' class often met under the shade of a tree between the old parsonage and the church.

One of the more remarkable Sunday School teachers in our history was

James Icem Miller, who for many years taught *the* men's Sunday School class. Born in Atlanta in 1877, he was a prominent and wealthy tobacconist who moved his membership to Wilson in 1932 with a letter from FBC in Henderson. S. L. Morgan had long been Miller's pastor in Henderson, and Miller was a great admirer of his. Morgan was a follower of the "social gospel" and spent much of his long ministry (he died at 101) taking on business interests who trampled the rights of the poor. As a young man he was a thorn in the side of mill owners in Burlington, and when he moved to Henderson he took on the tobacco business. Obviously he stepped on Miller's toes from time to time, and one day Miller spoke to him about it. Morgan recorded this in his diary:

Incidentally I touch now and then on the doom of the tobacco industry as the moral judgment of people awakes to its evil results for youth. Miller, getting rich on tobacco, my S. S. Supt., deacon, Baraca teacher, came to see me, disturbed at my undermining his spiritual influence. He did not agree with me in concluding that it is a great evil, and will be outlawed when people awake—its doom [will] come within a century, as I wrote in an article recently. So great is the blinding power of mammon on a good, true man! I made it clear that I should have to continue to touch on it, and to preach expressly on the evils of the cigarette. But I said his influence will hardly suffer as yet, while only a few will agree with me. I must teach—a generation that is all but deaf. Then another generation will come along and destroy the traffic. But it illustrates how mammon blandly seeks to stop the mouth of the prophet and stay reform.³

The disagreement did not deter Miller from continuing his work at Mr. Morgan's church and from admiring Morgan himself. Miller was something of a liberal in biblical interpretation, by the standards of the day. He learned this from Morgan, who believed in "progressive revelation." This was the idea that early in biblical days people had only the dimmest idea of God's nature and purpose but that as time went on they were able to understand more and more of God's revelation, until its final and complete revelation in Christ. This implies that much of the Bible, particularly in the Old Testament, should not be taken literally. This made sense to Miller, and he once wrote Morgan from Wilson, describing his approach (he is talking about his experience not only in Wilson but in Henderson as well): "I have always been under the handicap of having all classes of men before me, some young, some stupid, some quite

^{3.} S. L. Morgan diary entry for November 12, 1914, S. L. Morgan Papers, Collection 4228, Southern Historical Collection, UNC–Chapel Hill.

old and thoroughly imbued with the idea that every single word in the Bible was to be taken literally. . . . I have had to tread very cautiously." Even more clearly: "I have nevertheless attempted in a modest way to put clearly before my Wilson Bible Class the fact that much of the Old Testament was written at a time when . . . much of it had to be in pictorial language and should be so construed. . . . In this way I do not think I have done any harm to the conscience or the religious thought of anyone." We do not want to "shake the faith of those (and they are many) who simply take the printed word in the Old Testament at 100% valuation and let it go at that. . . . In other words, you certainly want to build up generally without destroying individually and losing the individual." He goes on to express his view that the Song of Solomon should be removed from the Bible and that a select committee of scholars should be appointed to update the Acts of the Apostles.⁵

Morgan wrote the manuscript for a book to be entitled *Progressive Revelation*. He tried to get it published but was unable to. Mr. Miller assisted Morgan in making the manuscript available, however. A copy is in the North Carolina Collection at UNC's Wilson Library in Chapel Hill. It is not a good book and was simply not publishable. There is nothing wrong with the content; Morgan was just a poor writer. But he pushed it. He once wrote to Miller about some of his efforts: "My good friend editor Tom Lassiter of the *Smithfield Herald*, an able, liberal thinker, and strong booster of my MS. on Progressive Revelation, wrote me last week to send him the book MS. to have his colleague on the University faculty, a definite liberal, Dr. Phillips Russell, to read it with the hope something can be done to have it published." One should bear in mind that "liberal" was still a proud label at the time. On March 5, 1948, the *Wilson Daily Times* began an editorial, "All of us like to look on ourselves as liberals. The degree is unimportant."

The Baptist State Convention meeting in Raleigh in November 1957, which Miller attended, had been especially acrimonious. The convention overruled an action of the WFC trustees allowing dancing on campus (chapter 23) and huffily appointed a "Committee of 17" to investigate the spiritual strength of all the Baptist colleges in the state. Mr. Miller wrote a rather long letter to the *Biblical Recorder*, published in the December 14, 1957, issue, supporting the trustees and expressing hope that the Committee of 17 "not permit them-

^{4.} James I. Miller to Dear Brother Morgan, Wilson, NC, January 4, 1947, S. L. Morgan Papers.

^{5.} James I. Miller to Dear Brother Morgan, Wilson, NC, April 17, 1947, S. L. Morgan Papers.

^{6.} S. L. Miller to Dear James, Wake Forest, NC, May 11, 1952, S. L. Morgan Papers.

selves to develop into a 'Baptist Inquisition.'" Mr. Miller was eighty years old when he wrote that.

Mr. Miller's function at the church went well beyond the Sunday School class; he was an informal adviser to and sometimes critic of Clyde Baucom. He was also a businessman whose skills the church was fortunate to be able to call on and who was revered as a spiritual guide. Folks remember the evening services at FBC when, at the end of the service, Mr. Miller simply rose from his pew to give the closing prayer. It had just sort of become his job. He died of prostate cancer at his home on Nash Street on November 7, 1964. In his will he left a sum to FBC from which the church still benefits. The Baraca class, which he taught, named itself the James I. Miller class in his memory. It was still meeting under that name as late as 1972. The big magnolia tree to the east of the sanctuary was planted in his honor.

Judge Naomi Morris taught a class of what she referred to as "high school children." She said, "You don't live in this world without giving something of yourself back to the Creator who made it all possible, and the only way you can do that is through the church. I taught Sunday School because I felt capable of teaching Sunday School." Her interviewer then remarked that she had met a female law student who had been one of her Sunday School students and was very fond of her.⁸

As the Sunday School Board's program of standardized, graded Sunday Schools took hold, separation of the sexes became the rule. When Dale Sessions was our associate pastor, he began a mixed class for young adults, which is still mixed even after they have grown older. Our older adults still segregate themselves. Bill Edwards began a class for single adults. While Tom Riley and Beth Cockman were on the staff, a special Sunday School class for young parents was begun. It is now known as the Faith and Fellowship Class.

BTU

The Baptist Young People's Union had its first meeting in 1896, a year after the SBC sponsored the idea. The story is told in chapter 14. In 1934 the name was changed to Baptist Training Union (BTU). It was a popular place for the young people in Wilson all through the 1950s. Naomi Morris reminisced about how she couldn't get a date unless she went to BYPU on Sunday night.

^{7.} Additional terms of the will are given in "Miller Estate to Benefit Family, Church, Colleges," *News and Observer*, November 25, 1964.

^{8.} Naomi Elizabeth Morris, interviewed by Pat Devine, Documenting the American South, University Library, UNC–Chapel Hill, November 11, 16, 1982, and March 29, 1983. Interview B-0050. Southern Oral History Program Collection 4007.

That was just the place for young folks to be. Names of some of the leaders are remembered: Howell Moss, Dorsey Blount.

The Training Union was a completely different animal from the Sunday School. There were quarterlies, but the content was different, and arranged differently. The Sunday School was limited to Bible study, but the BTU was not. Sometimes a biblical subject was the material for a given month or so, but it could also be something in church history, in Baptist history or Baptist thought, ethics, doctrine. There was no teacher. The young people themselves led the meeting and "taught" it by presenting a "part." The lesson material in the quarterly was divided into "parts," which were assigned in advance to members of the group. They were supposed to study them, prepare them, and present them before the group. If they were lazy or maybe too shy, they just read them, which wasn't quite the idea. Jackie Brooks recalls that the girls mostly read their parts and flirted with the boys. This was made easier by the fact that in the BTU, unlike the Sunday School, boys and girls met together. The purpose of the BTU was to train young people for church leadership by giving them experience in public speaking and in firsthand leadership of a group. Each group had an adult leader, but in no sense was this person a teacher. Through the BTU young Baptists learned something about religious thought and experience outside the Bible, about other faiths and denominations (always seen from a correct Baptist viewpoint, of course), about church history and a variety of subjects. Sunday night TV and other secular interests probably killed the BTU. When Dale Sessions came we rang down the curtain on it at FBC and began a program of weekend youth fellowships. These were creative and wholesome in their own way, but they never filled the niche that the BTU occupied. Jim Jarrard observes, and he may be right, that it is no coincidence that the takeover of the SBC by fundamentalists followed right on the demise of the Training Union. A whole generation knew nothing about Baptist tradition, so they fell for hard-line insistence on biblical inerrancy and the accompanying un-Baptist agenda. The Training Union may have been the best idea that Southern Baptists ever had.

WMU

The Woman's Missionary Union is a unique organization. It is distinctively Southern Baptist but has no organic connection to the SBC. In fact, it arose out of a protest against SBC policy. Remember the three symptoms of dangerous liberalism: abolition of slavery, temperance, and votes for women. After the Civil War, the liberals had taken over as far as most men in the South were concerned, because slavery was no more. But this made them all the

^{9.} Naomi Elizabeth Morris, interviewed by Pat Devine.

more wary about the rest of the agenda. In the 1880s there was some suspicious activity going on among Baptist women in the South. It was assumed that women could not be legitimate delegates (as they were still called) to the convention, but in 1883, while the SBC was meeting in Waco, the women who had come along with their husbands held a parallel meeting in a local Methodist church. It was such an oddity that a lot of men attended. When Martha Foster Crawford rose to address the audience, it was the first time that a woman had ever made a speech to a mixed congregation of Baptists. They met again the next year in Baltimore. The ladies were addressed by Adele Field, a missionary to China appointed by the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society. A man asked her, "Are you ordained?" She came back, "No, I was foreordained." In Augusta in 1884, two women actually had the nerve to attempt to attend the convention as delegates. The constitution was hurriedly amended to specify that delegates must be men. The men used a refrain that would be echoed in the days of desegregation much later: "The women don't want to be delegates. The women know and honor their place in society. Southern women do not want to disgrace themselves by speaking in public." Well, yes, they did. In those years there was a lot of commotion, during which Lottie Moon angrily resigned her position as missionary to China (it wasn't accepted).

In 1888 the SBC met in Richmond at FBC. The women went down one block to the Broad Street Methodist Church and founded the Woman's Missionary Union. The WMU has always considered itself an auxiliary of the SBC, an ancillary organization supporting its work but independent of the convention itself. Even after women came to be accepted as messengers to the SBC, the WMU went right on. Early on the men of the convention tried to capture it so as to control it, but efforts failed. More recently, after the fundamentalist takeover of the FBC in the 1980s, convention leaders have once again been trying to incorporate the WMU into the structure of the SBC so that it can be properly controlled, but so far the women have resisted, though it has brought some strain to the organization.¹⁰

At the Wilson Baptist Church something called the Ladies' Aid Society had long been active, principally raising funds for the church through sewing circles, bake sales, and that kind of thing. "Ladies' Aid Society" was a name commonly given to church women's organizations in the mid-nineteenth century; it was not unique to Baptists. You may remember from chapter 14 the incident on June 2, 1898, when some of the men had had enough of this women's activity and tried to put it down—unsuccessfully, as it turned out. The WMU appears to have been organized at Wilson Baptist Church in October 1897, since the records for 1898 indicate that Sunday, October 16, they

^{10.} Allen, A Century to Celebrate, 30-46.

observed the first anniversary of the Woman's Missionary Society. In the early years of the WMU there was some uncertainty as to whether it should be called "Society" or "Union," and the two names seem to have been used interchangeably. There are records of the WMS in our archives covering the years 1911–1915. There are also records of circle 9, the Mollye McCrary Circle, covering the years 1929–1934. In those books the name "Woman's Missionary Society" last appears in March 1930. The April minutes, and all thereafter, refer to the "Woman's Missionary Union." The first reference in our church records to "Woman's Missionary Union" is in April 1932.

The WMU actively seeks worthy causes to support. They have been eagerly helpful in projects abroad that Tommy and Susan Bussey Toms have found to do during their many adventuresome trips abroad—mission work on a quiet, informal basis. But it has taken them to Korea, Bangladesh, Laos, Thailand, the Philippines, and other places.

BAPTIST MEN

The first we hear of an active men's organization at FBC is in 1924, when there is record of a "Men's Club."

On March 14, 1976, the men of the church started using the House for a breakfast meeting. Toby Moss was chief cook, and husbands and wives were invited. The menu was pretty much the same as it is now, when the guys get together every third Sunday at seven-thirty for breakfast and a short program.

Later this morphed into the Brotherhood, as the SBC developed the Brotherhood Commission to organize men's work. Later it has come to be called Baptist Men. It lapsed for a while, but in the 1980s Lawson Smith worked to get it going again, and it has been a constant presence ever since. For years this rather informal organization has been meeting once a month on Sunday morning for breakfast, fellowship, and a short program, usually of an informative nature. There always seem to be a hardy team of cooks to get up early enough to have the grub ready by seven-thirty. Recently Lou Craig, Bill Watson, Donald Herring, and Roy Eakes have pretty well seen to it, with Glenn Wheeler and Jack Jones pitching in during the summer.

The high point of the year for Baptist Men is the annual Christmas auction. This tradition was begun by the James I. Miller class, previously known as the Baraca class, the men's Sunday School class Mr. Miller used to teach. It was a stag affair then. The ladies did the cooking, but only the men participated in the auction. That seems a strange arrangement now, but it went co-ed when Baptist Men made it their project. Church members donate items to be sold, often their own handicraft—fancy needlework or fine woodwork. A simple supper of sausage and collards is served, and a lot of money is raised and



Mike Hamilton and Gary Weller at groundbreaking for FBC's first Habitat for Humanity house (FBC)

donated to various worthy causes in Wilson: Wesley Shelter, Hope Station, the Community Soup Kitchen at St. Timothy's, the Mattie Brown Kitchen, and Habitat for Humanity. The men always keep funds on hand throughout the year to be given to individuals and families who may find themselves pinched. This often takes the form of paying utility bills or helping with the rent. They helped support Mack Moore on his mission trips to Swaziland.

A major project the men engage in is building houses for Habitat for Humanity. Several churches and other groups in town do this by turns, and as of this writing in June 2009 we're just finishing our second. Gary Weller and Bill Mercer have been the moving forces here, but they've had a full crew of willing workers, male and female. Baptist Men have taken the lead in organizing and manning disaster teams (chapter 33) to be dispatched to various places in Wilson and surrounding counties following tornadoes, hurricanes, or other such occurrences. Following Hurricanes Katrina and Wilma, several missions were undertaken to the Mississippi coast and southern Florida. Jack Jones and Vanise Hardee have been leaders in these efforts.

Chapter 31

Missionary Journeys

In Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

-ACTS 1:8 NRSV

LA CONGREGACIÓN BAUTISTA HISPANA DE WILSON

As Wilson County's economy began to diversify in the 1970s and wage levels began to rise for blacks as well as whites, there was a growing niche for lowpaid labor in the fields at harvest time. It became an attractive situation for migrant workers from Mexico and other Latin American countries. The 1980 census was the first to list Hispanic origin as a category of the population. In that year North Carolina had 56,667 such people, or just less than 1 percent of the state's population. By 1990, there were 76,726, just over 1 percent. In the next decade there was a large bump upward, with the 2000 census counting 378,963 Hispanic residents, or 4.7 percent of the population. Today that demographic is estimated by the Census Bureau as around 600,000, most of whom were born in the United States. Since the current recession began in 2007, the rate of immigration has slowed remarkably. Most of the Hispanic immigrants are from Mexico, seeking the same economic betterment that drove Europeans to settle in North America three hundred years ago. A sizable number are from various countries of Central and South America, many of whom have come seeking political refuge from harsh regimes.

The first notable presence of Hispanics in Wilson came in the 1970s, as seasonal camps for migrant workers sprouted here and there in the county and numbers of retired school buses full of them came to town for weekend

shopping. The better-off might travel around in tired old cars with Texas license plates. The better-off today drive newer cars with North Carolina plates, and they live in permanent housing rather than camps, usually rented mobile homes. The improved fortunes of the Hispanic community can be seen in the change of the ministries to them conducted by the churches of Wilson County.

The first Baptist work in the area was sponsored by the association as far back as the 1970s. The story at FBC, however, begins April 26–28, 1981, when Barbara Joiner, a popular speaker on topics dealing with missions, addressed some sessions of our WMU. What she said inspired two of the women, Mildred Hacker and Jean Rhodes, to see the mission opportunities right here in Wilson County among the Mexican migrants who passed through picking the cucumbers, peppers, and strawberries and working with the tobacco crop. They began by contacting the county health department to see just how they might help these people, who were living under unsanitary, crowded, unpleasant conditions in the camps. The health department directed them to the locations of various camps, and they went out to see for themselves. Seeing conditions there was an eye-opener. Needs were obvious. The association provided them with plenty of "mission kits," little packets containing toothpaste and brushes, soap, that kind of thing. They gave them out, they saw that people got to the health department, and they began setting up English classes. Once Mildred received a nasty phone call from a local farmer talking pretty ugly, warning them not to come around his place anymore.

Danielle Collins, a church member who was a native of France, became involved. She was useful because at the time a good many of the migrants were from Haiti. They actually spoke a French creole but could also understand standard French. On one occasion Mildred persuaded a group of the Haitians to dress their best and attend the morning worship at FBC. They sat together on a back row and participated by singing hymns in their own language along with the congregation. That was quite a novelty at the time, but the group was welcomed.

One of the young men of the church became involved, too. This was Chris Mullen, who wanted to be a missionary. He attended seminary at Union Theological Seminary in Richmond, a Presbyterian school. With a working knowledge of Spanish, he came to the local mission field in the summer, when help was most needed. He drove a van, provided people with transportation to medical care or groceries, organized some home visitation and worship opportunities, and did a bit of preaching. Chris went on to spend a couple of years in China teaching English. Along the way he picked up a PhD in English literature from UNC, but he still considered himself a missionary. His wife Lisa was ordained to the Presbyterian ministry, but Lisa and Chris now are with the Moravian Church, which has strength in the western

Piedmont. They live in High Point. She is a denominational worker, and he teaches English as a second language. That's his mission. Most of his students are of Hispanic origin, but there are Sudanese, Somalis, East Asians, South Asians, people from many areas. Chris never felt the call or need for ordination himself, but he was raised to do right and took it all seriously. FBC can take pride in Mr. Mullen.

By June 1986, the work among the local Hispanics had developed to the point that they were holding weekly Bible study on Monday nights in the church. By 1987 we were calling it the Spanish Mission, and a pastor was found for it: Marvin Romero. He was followed by Enio E. Agüero and then Israel Tapia. Cipriano Moreno Velásquez came in June 1993 and stayed two years. We ordained him to the ministry. Next were Ángel Morandi, followed by Gilberto Barbosa. The current pastor is Dr. Abdias Mora, a native of Chile. He is a scholarly gentleman up in years who has a passion for the ministry.

The mission has at its disposal a nice tract of land out in the county, given the church for the purpose by Alton Absher. As of May 2009 they had about \$90,000 on hand toward construction of a building, which they anticipate would cost \$200,000 in addition to feeding and housing about fifty people from Baptist Men (a state convention agency) for a few weeks. These guys volunteer their services to put up church buildings. There are about sixty members of the mission, with three of their number serving as deacons. Most of the men are employed in the fields and in construction work. They're better paid than they used to be, and stewardship is something that it makes sense to cultivate, since they are now in a position to give of their own income to the church. The stability of the Hispanic population is partly up to Congress, of course. Until a lot of legal questions are settled, many of these people will consider themselves still migrants even though they have permanent addresses and telephone numbers here. The children grow up as native speakers of English, and integration into the wider community will inevitably follow. First Baptist, along with numbers of other Wilson County churches, can take some pride in the part we've played in advancing the cause of Christ and of human well-being. Mildred Hacker and Jean Rhodes have to be remembered as the "saints behind that mission," as Jim Jarrard puts it.

FBC IN FOREIGN FIELDS

In 1983 Dr. Cecil Rhodes, a local physician and member of FBC, attended a session of the Christian Medical and Dental Association at Camp Brackenhurst (now Camp BlueSky) in Kenya. At these meetings medical missionaries from a wide geographical area assemble for about ten days to learn about developments in medicine that will be useful to them in their ministries. Doctors and dentists have to keep up with what's going on, but it's hard for

them to do that when they are stationed in remote areas. This program made it possible, but it also presented a problem: who will take care of their medical missions while they're away? They needed volunteers for this, and Cecil signed up. He very soon went to Jordan to allow a missionary from there to attend the Kenya school, and later did the same thing in Nepal, standing in for a medical missionary who went to Indonesia to a similar school for a couple of weeks. He saw and treated a lot of serious disease there—far more than he'd ever see in the same amount of time in the States. He did this without backing from FBC or the SBC or anyone else. He just saw the opportunity and took it.

On December 26, 2004, a powerful earthquake off the coast of Sumatra unleashed a tsunami that had deadly effects around the Indian Ocean—perhaps the deadliest natural disaster in recorded history. In February Dr. Kunjumon Chacko visited FBC on a Wednesday night to speak about the damage done in his community in Kerala State in southern India. He is a Baptist leader in India and operates a prison ministry, a children's home, and a seminary in a community near the coast. He spoke especially of the construction needs and of the fishermen's need for help in getting boats back into the water so as to resume their livelihoods. Carol Bullard took that part about construction to heart and said to herself, "I can do that." So she went. She wasn't sponsored by the church or anyone else; she just bought a ticket and went. She stayed six weeks. At first she did some heavy building work, but eventually she was convinced by Dr. Chacko and her age that she could



Mr. Prakasan and Dr. Chacko at launching of *Wilson Baptist*, given by FBC after the 2004 tsunami. (Photo by Carol Bullard)

be best used to help with the children's home, she spent most of her time with the children. She had some rich experiences, capped by an occasion when a little girl brought a pan of water to wash her feet, then rubbed an oil into her hair. Meanwhile, back in Wilson the church raised enough money to buy a fine new boat and equipment for a fisherman named Prakasan—a boat big enough for him plus five others who worked for him, thus supporting six families. He painted on the bow in bold blue letters, WILSON BAPTIST.

Mack Moore, an RA director and Sunday School teacher, took off with a group of other volunteers from the association for a two-week stay in Swaziland in February 1997 and again in June 1998. They engaged in construction work as well as leading Bible studies in local congregations.

Pastor Murray began talking with the church council about the possibility of sending mission teams out of the United States annually for three years, leading up to our 150th anniversary. They settled on Mexico, since it was close and we had a Spanish mission working largely with folks from Mexico. Dr. Murray, working through the state CBF, discovered Faith Ministries in McAllen, Texas, a border city doing work across the river. Winter Park Baptist Church in Wilmington had gone on some mission trips with this group, and FBC sent Dr. Murray on one of these trips to get a feel for it. He led a local team there in 2008, a varied group of different ages: Marla Whitley; Darleen Baker; Philip Johnson; Melodye, Lewis, and Steven Tomlin; James and Kaitlin Saunders; Eddie, Charlotte, and Cameron Hicks; and James Powell. They stayed for a week, doing construction work on six houses being erected after the Habitat for Humanity fashion. One of the houses has a plaque with our church's name and a drawing of our steeple. They worked and worshipped with several Mexican families during the week, while spending nights in the Mexican town of Miguel Alemán. It was a powerful experience for the participants. And so was the second such trip, which took place in 2009; Marla Whitley, Steve Clayton, Gary and Brenda Farmer, Adam Lane, Tim and Zach Rogers comprised this second team. Each time, FBC paid half the expenses of each person going for the first time. We also raised money for construction materials.

Several of our young people over the years have ventured abroad for limited periods of mission work under the aegis of the Foreign Mission Board or other agencies. Sara Hacker spent time in the Windward Islands, and Chris Mullen in Spain. And though I am not calling California a foreign country, this is the place to mention Robbie Youngblood's mission trip to California with Campus Crusade for Christ.

Two young men who grew up in our church became career missionaries. On July 11, 1954, we ordained Marion T. Lineberger, who was then pastor of the mission at Kincaid and Adams, now Grace Baptist Church, where he served as pastor 1954–1958. On the same occasion L. V. High, Jr., assistant pas-

tor at Five Points, was ordained. The sermon was preached by Dr. Kincheloe of Rocky Mount and the prayer given by Mr. Baucom. Lineberger, a native of Gaston County and a Furman graduate, later served churches in Onancock, Virginia, and in Charlotte until 1964, when he and his wife Polly were appointed as missionaries to Argentina. There they served until 1996. The Linebergers retired to Ware Shoals, South Carolina, where they became active in work with the local Hispanic community. In January 2002 Marion began teaching Spanish part-time at North Greenville College, but he died suddenly in March of that year, during the spring break.

More recently Don Pittman, son of Braxton and Rosa, entered the mission field. He had a degree in soil conservation from NCSU and believed that he could put it to good use in a missionary situation in a developing country. He already had some experience in overseas travel doing agriculture development trips to Antigua, Albania, and Mozambique. His wife Janet, a medical technician, joined him on a trip to Ethiopia in 1987–1988, doing famine relief as well as medical and agricultural development.

Don grew up in FBC hearing about the call to be involved in missions. He says he couldn't teach and encourage others to be involved if he himself weren't willing. When Don told his parents of his plans to be a missionary, it was an Easter Sunday, and well, Rosa said it just ruined her Easter. Don and Janet applied to the International Mission Board of the SBC, but the new leadership in the SBC was not interested in any kind of mission work



Don and Janet Pittman with Rebekah and Joshua (Rosa Pittman)

other than hands-on evangelism. The Pittmans felt frustrated. They believed they had a call from God to do a certain work, but the door they knew best was closed. They had an intensive prayer weekend, and after it they received a call from someone at the CBF, saying they had heard the Pittmans were interested in doing agricultural mission work, and offering them a position pretty much like what they had wanted to do. They considered it an answer to prayer, and in 1999 they went full-time with the CBF. Before long they found themselves, along with their children Joshua and Rebekah, in a certain Asian country doing just this sort of work. (The CBF does not identify its missionary personnel in countries where their safety could be compromised.)

Don Pittman invited Doug Murray to come over in 2006. His task was to meet the various missionaries of various denominations in the city, as a resource and encouragement. He made them aware of the Missionary Family Counseling Service based in Winston-Salem. On the weekend he led members of Don's church (called a "fellowship") through a study of Ephesians. His remarks were translated by an interpreter, who came up short when Doug mentioned a baptistry. (These people go to a park near salt water for their baptisms.) It was explained as something like a window in the church that lets you see people being baptized.

In 2005 a team from FBC visited the Pittmans and spent time doing some construction in the building that the "International Fellowship" was using for worship and Sunday School. The team included Tom Riley, Beth Cockman, Chris Pittman, Marla Whitley, and Faye Maclaga King.

Chapter 32

Young'uns

They are the offspring of the blessed of the LORD.

—ISAIAH 65:23 NEB

NE SUNDAY IN 1937 Louise Deans carried little Barbara Jean to Sunday School, to Mattie Moss's class. Louise went to her own class, which Mrs. Ellis taught. After Sunday School Louise went back to the old parsonage, where the nursery was in those days, but Barbara Jean wasn't there! Mrs. Moss and the other teachers looked, and deacons looked through the sanctuary. Not there. After half an hour of frantic searching, Mrs. W. H. Sharp, Barbara Jean's grandmother, came driving up with her. Barbara had decided to go to the Methodist church! Someone recognized her on the street and contacted Mrs. Sharp. Grady Deans, Louise's husband, had stayed home that day to keep Barbara Jean's one-month-old brother while the other two went to church.

Several remember a hot summer Sunday in church when Dr. Ellis was preaching, when his little grandson came walking up onto the rostrum, and said, "Granddaddy, it's hot in here. Just tell them Jesus loves them and let's go home." Horace Ricks remembered a time when his son Garland was about two years old, and a fire engine went blasting down Nash Street during church. Garland jumped up and yelled, "Fire truck make lot of noise!"

In 1950 Mrs. Bradley and Mrs. Stott were caring for the little ones during Sunday School and church. One Sunday, while the group was listening to Bible stories and singing, little Rusty Jeffries climbed through the kitchen window of the bungalow, the old parsonage, that was used for the nursery.

Jeff and Kay Jeffries were concerned, to say the least, when after church was out, Rusty was nowhere to be found. Everyone was concerned, but soon a deacon came walking up, holding Rusty by the hand, and said, "Well, I finally caught him when he got to Belk-Tyler's." Rusty looked up and said, "I runned away." Belk-Tyler's department store was across Nash Street from the church. Herb "Jeff" Jeffries was manager.

When the Chrismon tree tradition got started, Mr. Bussey thought it would be a good occasion to teach the children of the church about some of the symbols of the faith. One Sunday a group of youngsters was brought in during Sunday School and sat in the pews up near the tree while the pastor explained the meaning of the Chrismons. Then he asked if any of the kids had questions. Kenneth Bullard raised his hand. "How did they get that big tree in here?"

When Lynwood Walters was associate pastor, we had a big Easter egg hunt, with boiled eggs. By the time of the hunt, worms had come up from the ground and were crawling over the eggs. Parents were horrified, but the children were delighted and put them in their sacks anyway.

Children are always good for stories like those. As we saw in chapter 29, our Sunday School work began with children, and as we saw in chapter 14, the Training Union began with teenagers. As the church grew and as the SBC developed rigorously graded programs for all age groups, our work with children and young people grew and became more involved.

Dedication of children in church on a Sunday morning began with Mr. Bussey. He once described it this way: "Our Christian life is one of covenant making. . . . For each of these covenants there is a ritual. For our covenant with God—baptism. For our covenant with our spouses—the wedding vows. For our covenant with our children—a service of dedication."

RAs

The Royal Ambassadors (RAs) were active here by 1911. The first chapter of this organization was formed in Goldsboro in 1908. In May of that year the annual meeting of the WMU voted to create and promote this program for boys, involving sports, camping, and hobbies, but with an emphasis on missions. Mrs. W. M. Petway was so taken with the idea that she rushed back home to Goldsboro to organize a chapter so that Goldsboro FBC could claim to have had the first RA chapter. In 1911 the RAs were meeting here on Sunday afternoon twice a month. Men were always enlisted as counselors, so in 1953 the denominational RA work was transferred from the WMU to



GA coronation ceremony ca. 1965 (FBC)

the Baptist Brotherhood Commission.² There was some built-in competition with the Boy Scouts, a more popular and successful program, but the RAs had a good run at FBC. Mack Moore was the most recent director, but it no longer meets, having been dissolved into the general youth program of the church. In 1998 Mack became the RA Director for the South Roanoke Baptist Association.

GAS

The GAs (Girls' Auxiliary) was a missions-oriented organization for girls under the aegis of the WMU. In 1950 Kay Jeffries was GA leader, and once she devised a play for the girls to put on for a Sunday evening service. She had a light placed on the outside of the church to shine on the Good Shepherd window, and the image was worked into the play. Kay remembers that this

gave Mr. Baucom the idea of moving the window from its place in the old church to its present place behind the baptistry, where it is lit from behind as it was for the GAs that evening.

Kay and some of the girls had a real scare one rainy night when driving back from Camp Caswell, where they had gone for a week during the summer of 1950. Four girls sat in the back of the old green Pontiac, and one sat in front with Kay and Rusty, Kay's squirming three-year-old. It was hard driving in the pouring rain, and when the car approached a bridge Kay pulled to the right to let oncoming traffic by, but when she touched the brakes the car skidded off the road into a ditch and came to rest on its side. The door was too heavy for Kay to get open by herself, but she talked to the girls and tried to calm them down. No one seemed to be hurt. Some men nearby had seen what happened, though, and came running to get everyone out. In fact, there was a doctor's office a few steps away, and he examined everyone. No damage done—to the girls, anyway. Kay's husband Jeff came down to pick them up, and later Kay's doctor put her in bed for a while to treat her for shock. It was actually a close call. The car could easily have plunged into the swift, overflowing river beneath the bridge. This was about as bad as one time that a busload of children went to a choir festival out of town and returned with one child missing. It turned out all right, but it was disconcerting, to say the least.

SUNBEAMS

The Sunbeams were a missionary organization for children under age nine. The idea originated in Boston and spread southward during the late nineteenth century. The first group to be called a Sunbeam Band was formed among Virginia Baptists in 1886. The WMU in North Carolina endorsed the idea in 1889. The convention-wide WMU assumed responsibility for its development in 1896.3 The first mention I find in our records is from 1911, when Blanchard was pastor. Like the RAs, the Sunbeams met Sundays twice a month at four o'clock, but on the two Sundays the RAs were not meeting. The one bulletin that survives from the Chambliss years mentions the Sunbeams as a special joy to pastor and people. A report from December 1933, early in Dr. Ellis's stay, mentions the Sunbeams as among three "junior organizations" of the WMU; the others were the GAs and the YWA. Perhaps the men of our church had already assumed responsibility for the RAs, or perhaps it had disbanded for a time. Someone remembers Annabelle Thurston leading the Sunbeams and recalls especially one time when the little girls were doing calisthenics to some recorded music and Mr. Baucom looked in

to see what was going on. It may have been too much like dancing for his approval, but he never said anything about it.

WEDNESDAY NIGHT ACTIVITIES

In the late 1990s the traditional youth organizations sort of melted away. Volunteer help could not be found, and we had a minister for children, Beth Cockman. She and Tom Riley, the associate, put together a youth program to take the place of the older forms, which met on Wednesday evenings, as did the others. In 2000 Susan Johnson came in as youth minister, which provided activities for the teenage group. The children's program underwent a radical transformation during the last ten years. The children would meet after the Wednesday night fellowship supper. Over a period of some months, some black children from the neighborhood began attending, perhaps drawn by the free hot dogs, but going to the mission activities, too. They weren't paying for the meals, but we didn't want to turn them away. Quite a few more started attending, and the behavior of some of them became troubling, then became a serious problem, involving foul language, shoving, and rudeness. These children were not used to FBC-type surroundings. Some of the white parents began to complain. Sandy Pittman, minister to children at the time, began working on the problem, but she soon had to resign because of her job responsibilities outside the church. Deacon chair Marla Whitley then appointed Melodye Tomlin to lead a team retooling the program, and after a year's trial it has so far worked pretty well. Certain adults at the church volunteered to sit at tables during the fellowship meal, and certain of the neighborhood children were assigned to those tables and those people. The four or five children that had been causing the most trouble were simply disinvited, and for a few weeks they had to be turned away at the door. Also, a cap was put on the number of children we could accommodate. The children, black and white together, are divided into three age groups, and each group pursues Bible study and does some singing and some handicrafts on Wednesday nights. A tightly structured curriculum of published material is followed, and now there is a program in which the children as well as the parents feel safe. Melodye and Lewis Tomlin are directing the program astutely. It's known by the acronym ROCK: Reaching Out to Children with Kindness.

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL

Vacation Bible School is another idea that began in one denomination and spread to others. The first was held in Epiphany Baptist Church in New York City in 1898. The idea spread rapidly, and in 1924 the Sunday School Board in Nashville opened a Vacation Bible School Department. Dr. Mercer, a strong supporter of SBC programs, wrote in his ledger of a Vacation Bible School

that was held from June 14 through July 4, 1926, for children six to twelve years old. This is the first mention of a VBS here that I have found. He reported an enrollment of 120 and an average attendance of over 100. It has apparently been going every summer since then, sometimes in conjunction with other downtown churches. It's been a regular fixture at the church ever since. A few years ago we held a joint VBS with Christ Temple of Praise, an African American church only two blocks away. It was held at our church, and it went well. Dr. Murray remembers sitting at a table with one of the ladies from Christ Temple and explaining to her the problem we were having with neighborhood children on Wednesday nights. He asked if she had any advice. "Good luck," she said.

BOY SCOUTS AND GIRL SCOUTS

In 1974, September 14–15, we observed the fiftieth anniversary of Boy Scout Troop 8. No mention is made of this in our church records for 1924, so evidently the Scouts have better records than the church. The mayor was invited on Saturday for an afternoon ceremony and an evening cookout. Sunday morning Mr. Bussey gave a special sermon, and that afternoon there were special displays of scouting skills. The Scouts have always been an active group and have not lacked for interested leadership. For many years in the recent past Bill Mercer saw to the Cub Scouts, and Lewis Lee the Boy Scouts. Cliff Overman, Lou Craig, and Hilton Carlton have also been leaders.



Eagle Scout ceremony for John Campbell (center) with ($l\ to\ r$) Hilton Carlton, Lou Craig, Bill Mercer, and Cliff Overman (Lou Craig)

Some time ago there was an active Girl Scout troop, Troop 24, at FBC, but no one today seems to remember when it started or when it ceased to exist, only that Naomi Morris and Alma King were leaders. A new troop of Brownie Scouts started up again in 2008, with Cindy Murthy as leader and Michelle Anderson as assistant.

YOUTH ACTIVITIES

After the dissolution of the BTU and some of the other traditional organizations for children and teenagers, we made do with a number of temporary fixes. Until we hired someone with the specific responsibility of minister to youth, which would not be until 1992, the overall charge of the youth program fell to the associate pastor. The associates did a good job, but they needed help.

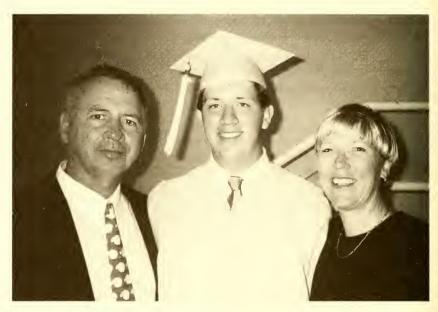
In 1973, Burnie Collins, a senior at ACC, was hired to work with youth through the summer. At time we hosted youth groups traveling from other churches. In June 1973 a group from Irving, Texas, visited Wilson to present the folk musical "Life."

In 1975 we bought the Harris house on the corner of Nash and Daniels. It became the center for youth activities and was known simply as "the House." The House was torn down after the complete remodeling of the third floor of the education building.

In the 1980s Carolyn Hill, director of activities, organized a puppet team among some of the young people. Using hand puppets, the youngsters put on fun shows that often had some moral or religious point to them. In 1984 the group went to New Orleans under the aegis of the Home Mission Board. They were supposed to perform at the World's Fair, but the weather turned bad, so they did a two-hour show in Jackson Square. Officials told them they drew the largest crowd of the occasion. The team stayed in the French Quarter at Vieux Carré Baptist Church. The youngsters spent a lot of time walking around, and they enjoyed the New Orleans food, from the gumbo to the beignets. On the way down they "sang for their supper" at vesper services in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, and on the way back they stopped at Rome, Georgia. "In more ways than one, the trip was a learning experience. With a reputation for accepting members of both sexes who have chosen to live their lives in non-traditional roles, New Orleans was fascinating to the young Wilsonians, most of whom had never been exposed to anything like it before in their lives." Tommy Toms, a frequent volunteer in the youth program, accompanied the group to Louisiana.

In March 1981 Rick Pridgen came on board as youth ministry helper, or

^{4.} WDT, September 1, 1984.



Clay and Susan Johnson with son Travis (FBC)

House chaperone. We have had various people, often ACC students, step in during the summer to work with the program, including Burnie Collins, Buddy Burgess, Chuck and Vanda Miller, Lois Ann Wasson, and Tom Morris.

Raygina (Ray) Beale began a part-time term with us as youth minister on March 1, 1992. She is a graduate of Peace College and NC State. When we hired her she was a divinity student at Duke. She and her husband Roger were popular with the young crowd, but she left us on May 7, 1995. She may have been pretty well burned out, since for the past year she had been the only minister on the staff other than Clyde Patterson. At this point we asked Kelly Ham to be interim youth minister. Kelly was a college student doing an internship. She stayed on through December 1996, shortly after Mike Hamilton came. The leadership of the youth program then was taken up by volunteers Clay and Susan Johnson and Donnie and Angie Hare, until Tom Riley came in August 1998. Beth Crawford was our next minister of youth, beginning in August 1998, but she only stayed about a year. Then Susan Johnson, one of our own, made herself available, and we hired her for the position, and she served wonderfully from May 2000 until 2009. With ample help from husband Clay, Susan developed a program for teenagers called WOW, or Worship on Wednesdays. They met in the House until the third floor of the educational building was ready for use.

Once on a skiing trip to West Virginia, there was a minor road accident.



Kay Simpson singing, Clyde Patterson accompanist, at benefit concert for Habitat for Humanity (FBC)

While the teens were waiting in the cold for the highway patrol to arrive, a lady in a nearby house invited them in to keep warm, and gave them cocoa. When they left she told James Saunders, who was driving the van, that it was the nicest group of young people she'd ever met.

Kay Simpson came to us in November 1996 as minister for children and outreach. Kay was a Duke Divinity School graduate, ordained to the ministry at FBC Laurinburg on July 13, 1997. She left June 3, 2001, to become pastor of Westfield Baptist Church in Dunn. She was serving as minister of music at Memorial Church in Buies Creek when she suddenly died at home on September 25, 2006. She was forty-eight.

Kay was followed by Beth Cockman, who worked with us part-time while a student at Campbell Divinity School. We then looked to two of our own: Sandy Pittman, who worked with older children, and Amity Page, who looked after the younger ones. Sandy had to resign because of pressure on her time (she teaches at Wilson Community College), so in 2006 Amity took on the whole job as our minister to children. She had been a stay-at-home mother since 1998, but during that time she had stayed active as a freelance writer. She is doing an outstanding job now at FBC.

We first got to know Daniel Heath when he was a Barton College student. He got the BSU there up and running again, this time as the Barton Christian



(Above) Bell in our steeple, founded in 1876 (Photo by Daniel Heath) and (*right*) Daniel Heath ringing the bell that had not been rung in years (Photo by author)



Ministry. He was our youth intern during the 2006–2007 term. His professional focus in college was in audio recording, and after graduating he spent two years working out of Nashville, but mostly on the road, with Christian musician Gordon Mote. In 2009 we took him on as full-time youth minister. Daniel is a talented musician himself, and we look forward to a vigorous and active youth program under his leadership.

Daniel was a fearless guide for this old guy when he wanted to clamber around in the church attic and steeple to get a picture of the bell. I wasn't willing to trust myself on the scramble up to the bell itself, but Daniel went shinnying right up those vertical ladders. Took some good pictures, too.

BSU

When I came on the scene in 1965, Jessie Daniel was the Baptist Student Union adviser at the college, and she was glad to have some help. When Dale Sessions came on board at the church, the BSU began to take off. Other church people have helped out over the years, like Larry and Martha Whitlock and Frank Bryan, other folks employed by ACC. The BSU became an active group and attracted a good many students who were not Baptist. One year the president was a young woman who was Catholic; another year it was a Methodist fellow. The state convention BSU people from Raleigh, who would come by occasionally because ACC was not large enough for a full-time director, were a bit puzzled by this, but never tried to challenge it. A number of BSU'ers went into the ministry or mission work, though not necessarily with the SBC. Steve Bradley grew up in our church and was active in the BSU while at ACC, but was ordained into the Presbyterian ministry and now serves a Methodist church. Steve has preached for us a number of times. Rick Clayton is a former BSU leader who is now pastor of a large Methodist

church in Raleigh. Robert Thompson went on the Southern Seminary in Louisville and is now pastor of FBC in Ashland, Virginia. Lois Ann Wasson, along with a couple of seminary students, went to New York City one summer and started a church in an abandoned Chinese laundry. She is now a missionary in Peru, representing the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Other BSU'ers who played a part in our church life, and in whose lives FBC played an important part, include Carol Wall and Cynthia Overman. Cynthia (now Williams) taught Sunday School and was in the Sanctuary Choir.

The BSU was a welcoming group. In the 1960s there was a young man in his thirties, Marvin Webster, son of good FBC members and brother of Charles



Jessie Daniel, longtime BSU adviser (FBC)

A. Webster, whose colorful career has been described in chapter 23. Marvin had some learning disabilities. He looked perfectly normal, but there was something childlike about him. Somehow he got into the BSU, although he was older and certainly not a student, but he was always made welcome, and the family remained grateful for this well after they had moved away from Wilson. Occasionally there was trouble. Larry Bennett once took a BSU group to Ridgecrest, where one boy caused a disturbance that required later action by FBC, ACC, and the Baptist State Convention. On Bill Edwards's watch there was an episode that required intervention by FBC, ACC, and in this case the Salvation Army. When you work with young people, this sort of thing is going to happen. Mr. Bussey observes that churches' youth directors tend to burn out. In 1977 the BSU at ACC was voted "the most outstanding BSU in North Carolina," out of twenty-nine. Bill Edwards was adviser at the time.

Membership in the BSU fluctuated. One year it just sputtered and died out. The president-elect for the new year was Sandy Baker. At the first meeting of the year she and I showed up, and no one else. We had a brief prayer together, and that was the BSU activity for the year. Sandy Baker will be known to FBC folk today as Sandy Pittman; along with her family, she has served this church well in a number of capacities, paid and volunteer. When Frank Bryan came to the college and the church, the BSU revived. The church was often enriched by ACC students who came our way during their years in

Wilson. In September 1984, one of these, Becky Wagner of Zebulon, active in the BSU as well as FBC, lost her brother in the Hezbollah bombing of the U.S. embassy in Beirut. The church family felt her loss. The future of the BSU's relation with FBC looks good with Daniel Heath, a BSU veteran, coming in as adviser. Daniel was with the Barton BSU when it went to the Gulf Coast with other North Carolina BSU'ers on a mission trip to help Katrina victims in Mississippi.

Chapter 33

Deeds of Love and Mercy

Always abounding in energy for the Lord's work.

—1 CORINTHIANS 15:58 NJB

S SUE PETTUS ONCE TOLD Thellis Myers, "I declare, it's gotten so that Baptists can't go to church without them being served a meal. Pretty soon \mathbf{h} they are going to be passing out sandwiches between hymns." Someone has to be in charge of this, so for many years we have had a church hostess who presides over preparations for dinners and other social occasions held at the church. Our longtime hostess Hattie Wooten retired in June 1968, and we had to learn to get along without her specialty dish, scalloped potatoes. Now it can be revealed: the secret ingredient was horseradish. Lucille Cole filled the position for the next ten years. Then Sally Boswell took it over, working at the same time as financial secretary. During Sally's tenure we started the Wednesday night suppers, something Clyde Patterson had been pushing for. Sallie made a wonderful casserole out of Vidalia onions, and her countrystyle steak was a favorite. She enlisted volunteers to help out on Wednesday nights, divided into teams. Each team would take a week. In July 1991, Sally retired after many years of service to the church as financial secretary and hostess. For the next year there were no fellowship suppers because of the building program, but when the new kitchen and hall were ready in the fall of 1992, Linda Wheeler was on board and ready to go, with twenty years of experience in food service, menu planning, catering, and supervision. The rotation system of cooking teams still continues. Linda is today the longestemployed member of the church staff.

Carolyn Hill came on the staff as director of activities soon after Bill Edwards left, at the beginning of January 1985. Carolyn, like Bill, was one of our own. Already a member of the church and deeply involved in its activities since 1976, we decided it would be a good idea to pay her for what she was doing and make a more formal arrangement. The two foci of her activities were with the older adults and with the youth. She began a program of senior activities that involved exercise classes, craft workshops, and out-of-town trips. In youth activities, Carolyn thought of herself as something more than a schoolteacher. Two and two will always equal four, she said, but she wanted to teach things not that clear-cut: how to make decisions and live a satisfying life. She found working with teenagers exciting because "they are able to look at things in a different perspective than we see things." Carolyn left in October 1991, and then Polly Jones was employed as a part-time interim youth minister to fill in a few months. After that our youth ministries have branched out in several directions, but our people have never particularly felt that they had to have organizations in order to get together and do things for other people's good or just to have fun. In these concluding chapters we've grouped some of those activities, and here are some others that don't quite fit anywhere else but shouldn't be neglected.

SENIOR ADULTS

Back in the 1970s, some of the older folks in the congregation would occasionally get together for lunch. When Larry Bennett came along he began to look on the group as a pretty regular thing, and began planning activities. When Carolyn Hill became director of activities, she did intensive planning of activities—starting an exercise group, for instance. When Carolyn left, it fell to Lynwood Walters, but Sally Boswell pointed out to Lynwood that the senior adults didn't need any supervision; they could jolly well do their own planning and take care of themselves. That was logical enough, and Lynwood was happy to become just an ex officio member of the group, which has now evolved into one of the church's regular organizations, with a slate of officers of its own. The group is certainly active. They've tried several names for it, but still haven't settled on one. For a while it was "Young at Heart." "Earth Angels" was tried on. One member suggested "Jurassic Park," but that wasn't everyone's favorite. A newsletter, The Senior Scene, long edited by Frances Moore, has been around since May 1991, monthly since November 1993, and copies are kept in the church archives, well preserved.

BALL TEAMS

For a couple of decades or more, FBC youth and young adults have fielded teams for baseball, softball, basketball, and volleyball. The teams would com-

pete in city leagues at Toisnot Park or the Recreation Center. For a while there was a bowling team. There is no record of when this began, since it was never an organized department of the church, but it seems to have begun in earnest during the Bussey years and reached its peak of activity while Jim Jarrard was pastor. When Jim was talking to the search committee, he warned us that he would not play softball for the church team. He said he liked playing, but became so competitive that his behavior was not up to church standards.

SEARCH FOR ACTION

Pat Cockrell, daughter of Onnie and Ann, had cerebral palsy. A "Search for Action" club was formed for the benefit of folks like her, who had different disabilities but wanted company and enjoyed doing new things. FBC made its fellowship hall available to the club, and it met for eight to ten years, bringing warmth into many lives. The Cockrells are grateful to the church for that accommodation. Mickey and Thyra Little were also involved in this.

AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAM

Ray Baker and Greg Godard came up with an idea after attending a statewide Brotherhood meeting in Raleigh, where they were introduced to a group called "Loaves and Fishes" that conducted afternoon tutoring sessions for underprivileged children. They thought starting an after-school program to tutor neighborhood children in their homework would be a good thing to do, so Greg got Steve Clayton, chair of deacons at the time, to appoint a task force. This group worked on it for about a year, visiting a couple of such programs in Raleigh and Tarboro, and having a woman from the Raleigh program visit us. We decided to go for it. It was not intended as an evangelistic program—in the narrowest sense. It was to help children with their schoolwork and instill a sense of satisfaction in learning and accomplishment. After a backyard Bible school one summer, a number of children were identified who might be good candidates for it, and Greg Godard conducted a door-to-door neighborhood canvass to identify some more, all in the target age group, K-3. Greg found parents who were eager for their children to be enrolled. Many of these parents had had good experience in church, something that had never happened to them in school, so they were more willing to put their children into a church group than one associated with the schools. Bobbie Warenda acted as director of the After School Program for ten years, from September 1997 on. For eight of those years, Kay Hanniford (not a church member) was associate director. Sue Dail (Sally Boswell's daughter) served in that position for the next two years. Since 2007, when Bobbie resigned, the program has not functioned. That's too bad, because it



Bobbie Warenda sitting a desk once used by first-grade students of Miss Lucy Culpepper (Photo by author)

was working well. A lot of volunteers were needed, since there were eight to ten kids enrolled, they met each day Monday through Thursday, and each child needed one volunteer. That added up to a lot of people. At first there was no problem. Some of the volunteers were Barton College students, or students from Fike or Hunt High or Greenfield School performing their community service. As the program went on, some volunteers had to drop out for various reasons. Many were elderly people who just became less able. The children were all either African American or Hispanic, living in the neighborhood. They came after school, and came faithfully, never missing unless they were sick. The

program did a lot of good. The parents were cooperative, and willing to follow through with suggestions at home. After the kids got past third grade, some parents begged Miss Bobbie to let them continue, and two or three stayed on into the fifth grade. It was a sad day for the families when the program had to shut down because the church wasn't able to find someone willing to take Miss Bobbie's place. Filling her shoes would be tough, but as she points out, there was no reason anyone had to manage things as she did. They can do it their own way.

DISASTER TEAMS

After Hurricane Floyd's visit in 1999, our men were so impressed by the organized work of Baptist Men in the relief efforts that they wanted to get into it too. A small enclosed trailer was bought, along with purchased or donated equipment to stock it, and a number of men and women attended training sessions held in Raleigh. These efforts were organized and coordinated, not just helter-skelter groups of well-minded folks who really didn't know what to do. Our people have worked locally when tornadoes have hit, and they traveled up to Edenton to help clear away damage after Hurricane Isabel in 2003. After the disaster that was Hurricane Katrina hit the Gulf Coast two years later, co-ed teams traveled down to Gulfport, Mississippi, three times,



Team of volunteers doing relief work in Gulfport, MS, 2005 (Jack Jones)

returning physically worn out but spiritually elated. In addition, Jack Jones and Tom Riley drove a group of BSU'ers from Barton down on a service trip. Vanise Hardee, Jack Sholar, Tom Simpson, and Jack Jones have been movers in this work among the men. On the first trip down, Ed Newton from New Hope Baptist went with them and noticed some of the equipment other church groups had. When they returned, Mr. Newton bought the van that is now marked for disaster relief and sits stocked, ready for action, in the church parking lot. After Hurricane Wilma hit Belle Glade, Florida, in 2005, a group made a trip down there.

BARNABAS MINISTRY

In 1999 Associate Tom Riley organized a small group of people, mostly women, who just wanted to do things to help our members who needed a little assistance with everyday living, like transportation to doctors and groceries, balancing the checkbook, maybe a little light housekeeping. The folks involved tried to keep the whole thing low-key to keep it from being institutionalized, with budgets and committees. They didn't even like to use the word "members." Alice Browder called it "a ministry of the heart." Delma Galloway said they were "trying to reach those who had fallen through the cracks." The structure was loose enough that anyone who saw a need in the

congregation and wanted to meet it could help do it through Barnabas. Joyce Witherington and Lib Baumgarner were two other faithful workers in that ministry.

COMMUNITY NEEDS

The shelter for homeless men in Wilson is, or used to be until very recently, an old fire station downtown, and is still known as Hope Station. FBC makes annual contributions to its ministry. But more than that, a large number of FBC members have donated many hours of their time to working down there on the days that food is distributed to families in need. Jennie Lee, who is on Hope Station's board, has taken the lead in this and has spent several hours down on her knees scrubbing the floor in that place. The WMU takes the Flynn Home, a shelter for alcoholic men, as one of its monthly charities. We also contribute to the Community Soup Kitchen at St. Timothy's Episcopal Church, and to the Wesley Shelter for women in abusive relationships. Alcoholics Anonymous has been holding meetings at FBC for years. The Gideons International were an occasional presence at FBC during the 1970s and 1980s. Tollie Epps and Cecil Rhodes were especially active in this effort. The Gideons are still in our yearly budget.

NICE PEOPLE JUST DOING NICE THINGS

One of the most active groups in the church in recent times has been one that has gone without a name—without a formal moniker, anyway. When Janie Reid Broadhurst retired, she and Barbara Bussey thought it would be nice to get a sewing circle together, just for the fun of being with each other and of making some neat things. They worked as a group for about thirty years, on Wednesday afternoons, and they turned out a lot of handcrafts, for most of which they never got much notice. One doesn't know where to start. The hospital needed stockingette caps for newborns. They had them, but our ladies took them and decorated them with a little pom-pom on top, and sewed some cute little figure onto each one, often with a seasonal motif, individualizing them. They turned out about 120 a month, and Bill Bussey delivered most of them to the hospital. They made afghans for nursing homes. They made decorative dishtowels and aprons, often with cross-stitching. Working together, they produced some elegant candlewick bedspreads and quilts. They took scrap cloth and transformed it into bedspreads for Hope Station, a homeless shelter downtown. They took men's socks and made monkeys for the hospital to use in amusing and distracting children: the nurse could give the monkey a shot and then give the child a shot. Most of the finer pieces they produced were donated to the men's Christmas auction, the proceeds

of which go to poor relief. There was a little bit of, if not hard feeling, at least regretful feeling when the ladies saw that objects of art they had produced were bringing smaller prices than pieces of woodwork turned out by the men. These also involved craft and skill, of course, but the work that went into them was more recognized by the men than the hundreds of hours that went into one of the ladies' quilts. Some of these quilts are around town. One hangs in the senior adult area of the church. Dr. Doug Brewer, a member of FBC, has one hanging in his office.

Lately a prayer shawl ministry has begun. Barbara Bussey got the idea from a friend at one of the Lutheran churches—it was something that churches had begun in the last few years. They are not ritual objects, like Jewish prayer shawls. They are simply crocheted or knitted shawls that are labors of love. When finished they will be blessed with a short prayer at a service, then presented to the sick and/or elderly, people who can actually use a shawl for warmth. In any case, the shawls let the recipients know that there are people who care for them. Each time they wrap the shawl around their shoulders, they can know they are embraced by the prayers of a loving community. Esther Jones is the party who has taken this idea and run with it. She makes a little ceremony of the presentation, which seems to mean a lot to the recipients.

No one knows when we first started putting flowers in the sanctuary on a Sunday morning just for sheer decoration. It probably goes back to the old church on Green Street. For a long time we used nothing but flowers and greenery we could gather locally. For a while the WMU circles took turns at this. Once when Jackie Brooks's circle was in the charge, they cut Queen Anne's lace and set it up on Saturday, not knowing it would be wilted the next day. Mrs. Baucom told her that when we got into the new church, other arrangements would be made for flowers. Margaret Simons, a lady of some taste, began seeing to flower arrangements then, and passed her skills on to Frances Carlton. Since sometime in the 1960s we have usually depended on commercial floral arrangements given to the church by individuals or families in honor of or memory of someone. On Monday, unless the donor claims the arrangement, some talented women of the WMU split it into several smaller arrangements and deliver them to shut-ins.

There is more involved in keeping the church attractive with small niceties like this than one could think. For many years Charles Barnes, a professional decorator, has seen to it that FBC looks good. He can discern distinctions in colors and assess their appropriateness in a way that few can. Among other things, he designed the chairs in the narthex, which were given in memory of C. C. Powell.

In May 1985, when the church was observing its 125th anniversary, Clay Johnson asked his five-year-old son what he wanted his church to be. Jacob

said he wanted it to be "nice, loving, forgiving, and sharing." Looking back over these past 150 years now, we know that we haven't been that way consistently and in every way, that we've acted like human beings from the very beginning. But mostly we have been that way, and we've tried hard. In these last few chapters we've given ourselves modest leave to ignore some of our shortcomings and point up some of the ways that FBC has indeed been a fellowship that is "nice, loving, forgiving, and sharing."

Chapter 34

The Knitting of the Knot

This is the time for singing; the song of doves is heard in the fields.

-SONG OF SONGS 2:12 TEV

OR EPISCOPALIANS, and Catholics, though they were few in early North Carolina, marriage was always a sacred ceremony to be held in sacred space—the church. For Catholics marriage was a sacrament. The Church of England had removed marriage from the list of sacraments, but it remained a ritual to be conducted according to the precise order of the Book of Common Prayer: "Dearly beloved, we are gathered . . . "

For the followers of the radical Reformation, continental Anabaptists as well as the Baptists originating in England and Holland, marriage was seen primarily as a family event, something to be celebrated in the home. In early days in North Carolina, almost every scheduled marriage performed by a Baptist preacher would be done in a private home, usually the home of the bride. This did not necessarily mean that weddings were more modest in scope. They could be social occasions of great interest and considerable expense, attracting many guests, invited or not. When weddings were made into social occasions, homes were more appropriate places than Baptist churches, which were really just simple meetinghouses where people gathered to worship, and for no other purpose. Homes provided hospitality.

By the end of the nineteenth century, however, with the changing social attitudes of the Progressive era, churches were becoming institutions with multiple functions. The sanctuaries were becoming larger, capable of holding

more wedding guests, and there would often be adjoining halls that could accommodate large wedding parties for celebrations after the ceremony. Church weddings tended to be more the exception than the rule until after World War II, when the hugely expanding economy and growth of the middle class made weddings that cost money more feasible for more families. Business interests were quick to seize on this, for there is a lot more money to be made in big church weddings than in home weddings. Wealthier families were willing to spend more, developing weddings into complicated affairs that cost the families not only quite a bit of money and time but also, especially for the couple, a great deal more emotional stress. Baptists had never had anything against being married in church, as far as I can tell. Being rather far removed from the Catholic tradition and even the English Reformation, they felt no necessity for church weddings. But when social conditions changed to the point that Baptists were less fearful of high-church ritualism and financially able to afford the costs of larger and more formal ceremonies, churches and pastors went along, although always feeling the tugs-of-war among the sacred, which they wanted to preserve; the secular, which insisted on inserting itself; and the intimate, which was simply surrendered. The very existence of spacious sanctuaries in bigger church buildings probably put subtle pressure on families to expand weddings to fill the space. We can't rule out the possibility that there was some social pressure felt, with Baptists feeling they had every right to do things the way the high-toned Episcopalians did.

Baptists never went as far in their anti-Catholicism as the Puritans who settled up in Massachusetts. To the Puritans marriage was a civil contract, and the church had nothing to do with it. It was performed by a magistrate, not a minister. That option was eventually made possible by state law everywhere. In the rough old border areas of England and Scotland, marriage was apt to be a kind of ritualized abduction, where the boy came and got the girl and they went off together. That form of marriage came to these shores with the people from those northern areas of Britain, and it survived in the form of marriages held at the homes of ministers. The couple wanted to be married in a proper legal way, but for one reason or another didn't want the families involved, so they went to the courthouse and bought a license (after that became legally necessary) and found themselves a preacher. They usually did this at the parsonage, where the pastor's wife or neighbors could serve as legal witnesses.¹

By the time weddings were being performed in Wilson Baptist Church,

^{1.} For a fascinating survey of differing British marriage customs imported into the American colonies, see Fischer, *Albion's Seed*, 75–86, 281–286, 485–490, 669–675.

brides may have been wearing white. This had not been done until 1840, when Queen Victoria was married and chose a spectacular white gown to wear for her spectacular wedding. Before that time there had been no standard color; anything was acceptable but black or red. Most popular were yellow and blue. Blue was the traditional symbol of virginity. But after Victoria wore white, brides all over the English-speaking world made it fashionable very quickly.

The oldest newspaper account of a wedding at Wilson Baptist Church that I have found—there may well be earlier ones—was that of Willard Moss to Mattie Harrison, reported in the *Wilson Advance* of October 3, 1895. It describes the church "beautifully decorated in ivy, holly, and goldenrod."

Isaac Morton Mercer, our pastor from 1919 to 1927, performed 165 marriages while at our church. Of these, 47 were in the church, 32 in private homes, and 84 at the parsonage. One was held at Carolina General Hospital and another at a place called Hutchinson's Studio. He kept a ledger detailing each of these weddings: who got married, where, and how much they paid him. Many of those 84 marriages at the parsonage were probably weddings where neither the man nor the woman was a member of our church, where the couples were just folks who wanted to get married and wanted to find a preacher to tie the knot. They might just knock on the door, and the preacher usually had nothing more important to do in the evening. Those performed at the church or in private homes were all probably scheduled in advance and prepared for; the ceremonial carryings-on might be simple or expensive, but almost all, if not all, of them involved couples of whom at least one, usually the bride, was a member of First Baptist.

By contrast, Pastor Murray has never in his years here conducted a single wedding at his own home or in the home of a church member. Except for a few at outdoor venues, usually rented, they have all been at First Baptist, though occasionally in the parlor rather than the sanctuary. The same can be said of Mr. Bussey and Dr. Jarrard. It can also be said that none of these pastors ever lived in a parsonage near the church, as Dr. Mercer did. Mr. Bussey conducted a Catholic-Protestant marriage held at FBC with Father Chase of St. Therese participating. In 1987 he participated in a Christian-Jewish ceremony at FBC, with a rabbi from Kinston also officiating.

By the time Mr. Baucom became pastor, church weddings were quite common, and their number no doubt increased when our present building was occupied in 1952, with its spacious (for the time) fellowship hall and even its own kitchen. By this point the church had become an attractive possible venue for weddings of people outside the church, who simply wanted to rent the space for the occasion. This brought problems of its own, which Catholic and Episcopal churches never encounter, since for them the marriage still remains a sacred occasion and the facilities are for the use of Catholics or



Harrell-Lamm wedding of 1952, the last wedding in the old church; Mr. Baucom officiating. This is one of only two known photos of the church interior. (Joyce Lamm)

Episcopalians who follow a strict liturgy word for word. Their church buildings are not spaces to be rented out to others.

In the latter days of the old church, the Herring-Harrell wedding was to take place on a Saturday night. Dr. Dick Pittman, a friend of the family, arrived for the rehearsal on Friday and thought the auditorium was the most awful-looking place he'd ever seen. The next morning he had seven painters at work covering the water-damaged walls with fresh paint. Sunday morning the congregation was surprised and pleased. The last wedding held in the old church was the Harrell-Lamm wedding of August 17, 1952. The photograph of the wedding party is one of only two photographs I have found taken in the interior of the church.

In 1979 a kneeling bench was made available for weddings. Charles Barnes designed it, E. V. Alford built it, and Gracie Clark fashioned the needlepoint cover.

There have been weddings that last in everyone's memory for odd reasons. Mr. Bussey remembers some, as do the ladies who have acted as wedding directors, such as Frances Carlton, Jennie Lee, and Karen Mercer, not to mention Mildred Grissom, Elaine Craig, Sue Copeland, and the august

Letha Stanley. At one wedding there was such a heavy snow that Mr. Bussey had to call the police to get him to the church. Very few people attended. A reception had been planned, but was cancelled. Late Saturday night July 9, 1997, the day before Cynthia Lee's wedding, a ferocious storm blew through Wilson, doing more damage than any event since Hazel in 1954. A large old tree in the churchyard toppled, and a heavy limb crashed through the roof. There was a lot of rain damage, narrowly missing the organ chamber. The Sunday wedding went on as planned. The church had electricity, but a big washtub had to be placed in the chancel to catch the dripping water. Same thing, but more so: there was a wedding planned for the church on Saturday, September 6, 1996. Hurricane Fran came through on Friday night, knocking down trees and power lines all over the city. It was a hustle and an effort, but the bride was determined to go through with it, and hostess Linda Wheeler, director Sue Copeland, and the Buildings and Grounds Committee, working with Clyde Patterson and Pastor Murray, were able to pull it off. They kept the doors open for ventilation. Clyde played the piano, and when he was supposed to chime the hour, he used a handbell. There was not a big crowd, but some people did show up.

There was one when a middle-aged couple were to be married, and the bride called it off just hours before the ceremony. Her children had put doubts in her mind, so she got on the phone and told people not to bother to come. At another there was such a heavy sleet at wedding time that the whole wedding party borrowed choir robes and proceeded right on down the aisle for the ceremony. Or the one where there had been so much celebration at cocktail festivities before the ceremony that the church smelled like a barroom. Or the wedding where the flower girl hid when it was time for the ceremony, and the ring bearer had to go back up the aisle to fetch her. During the ceremony, the little girl tied her basket to the back of the maid of honor's dress. The parents of another flower girl forgot to bring their daughter's shoes, so she went down the aisle barefoot.

Quite memorable was the first wedding held in the new church building, when candles were too close to the curtains and the curtains caught fire. On another occasion a fire started in the chime mechanism, and again the fire department attended the wedding. The bride had her picture taken on the fire engine.

At one particular summer wedding, perhaps in the 1970s or 1980s, Harriet Strickland and Mary Moss went out on the roadsides to cut flowers for a wedding the next day. Some were common roadside weeds, but they were blooming and beautiful. The next day, however, Clyde Patterson came into the church and found little puffs of downy seed floating all over the church. The wedding went well, even if the bride's father did have his tux covered with puffy weed seeds as he came down the aisle.

Doug Murray's most embarrassing wedding was one in which a groomsman "keeled over with a resounding thud." He continued the service; two guests, a nurse and a cardiologist, worked over the young man, who showed no sign of reviving. Murray wanted the couple to get out before the situation worsened. The couple exchanged rings, and the pastor led a quick prayer over "the fallen one," then whispered to Clyde, "Play!" The couple went on down the aisle, but the bride was pretty distraught. After the service, the bride's mother came to Doug and said, "I don't remember you declaring them 'husband and wife." And he hadn't. At any rate, God understood, and the state of North Carolina would never know the difference, but the family, who had been frequent visitors though not members, rarely returned after that.

Cameras eventually became a problem at weddings. At one there was a special distraction as someone with a camera stood in the baptistry, parting the curtain with a very visible hand as he did his work. That put a new rule in the rule book: no cameras in the baptistry or anywhere else at the front of the church. And there is indeed a rule book. Over the years FBC has had enough experiences with weddings that before the church can be used, certain things have to be made clear to the parties involved and agreements reached.

Since Baptists are not renowned for our liturgical correctness, there is wide flexibility in the order of service, with little bits added from time to time as small innovations become traditional and ceremonies more complicated. Sometimes the bride and/or groom will write their own vows. Usually they are satisfied with what the minister will say, and the minister usually uses some form found in a minister's manual. All of them are based on the marriage ceremony in the Book of Common Prayer, and there's nothing particularly odd about using the order for marriage in the BCP itself. The elegance of the wedding has no bearing on the outcome of the marriage. Every marriage eventually ends, by divorce or death. In either situation the pastor is usually involved in guiding someone through a process of grieving.

Chapter 35

The Snapping of the Cord

The dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it.

-ECCLESIASTES 12:7 RSV

ably someone in town who served as the local undertaker. "Undertaker" did not refer to someone who took people under—under the earth or anything else. He was called that because he undertook the responsibility for the burial of the deceased. It was not something families relished taking on themselves, though in rural areas, and maybe even in Wilson at this early time, it was necessary that they do it. The body was washed, dressed, and laid out in the parlor of the home, a room reserved for formal functions. Neighbors or friends would fashion the coffin of pine or poplar. The funeral would be held at home, usually with the preacher standing in the front doorway. After the brief service, a few men in attendance would be asked to carry the coffin to the mule-drawn wagon waiting to transport the remains to the graveyard. There a grave, again dug by neighbors or friends, would be waiting. The coffin, itself usually enclosed in a pine case, was lowered, some plain planks would be laid over it, and the bystanders would take turns with the shovel, filling in the grave.

When towns grew up and someone thought it would be nice to make a little extra money by undertaking all this responsibility, a new profession was aborning. The town undertaker was usually a furniture dealer, sometimes a hardware store owner, because these people had the materials for fash-

ioning a coffin. Many longtime funeral homes in existence today (including Shackleford in Wilson) began as furniture stores. In 1892 Wooten & Stevens, "Furniture Dealers and Funeral Directors," was the oldest business in town. It opened in 1870, and also sold stone grave markers. The better-stocked stores had coffins on hand; they didn't have to construct them. Commercial coffins were not as sturdy as the handmade ones, but they looked better and cost a bit more, so to some they seemed more satisfying. The word "coffin" went out of use. Those who dealt with funerals preferred the term "casket," which up to this time had referred to a small wooden box in which one might keep some valuables—jewelry and that kind of thing. What is more precious than the remains of a loved one? As businesses evolved that dealt with funerals, they called themselves "parlors," because traditionally the dead had been laid out, mourned, and prayed over in the parlors of homes. Meanwhile, the term "parlor" as a room for formal occasions had become so associated with death that people dropped the term and began referring to the "living room." Even after professional funeral directors with their horse-drawn hearses began to appear on the scene, many families still preferred to have the funeral "from the home." The Episcopal practice had always been to have the funeral "from the church," and almost from the beginning, Wilson Baptist Church was sometimes chosen as the site for funerals. 2 Preachers used to give sermons at funerals, but now they generally give a eulogy and read Scripture, often sharing the responsibilities with another minister. As at weddings, the material is usually read not directly from a Bible, but from a minister's manual that groups passages of Scripture appropriate for use at such ceremonies.³

Many funerals must have been conducted that gave rise to interesting stories, stories that have perished along with the people who remembered them. Here are some that still circulate, stories that deserve to be remembered.

On August 19, 1962, when interim pastor Broadus Jones was conducting the funeral of Sue Blount Pettus, people started to smell smoke. The fire department was soon on the scene and doused a small fire that had started somewhere in the back of the church when a motor overheated. There was a racket from the fire engines, but the service was not interrupted. Mrs. Pettus's friends laughed at how appropriate it was that she should go out with

- 1. Wilson Mirror, March 8, 1893, and also regular advertisements in the Mirror.
- 2. Some of this information comes from a fascinating study of customs in Chowan County, 1880–1915, but things could not have been much different in Wilson. See Boyce, *Economic and Social History of Chowan County*, 189–194.
- 3. A few years ago I attended a funeral in a large Baptist church in Tennessee. The preacher gave a full-length sermon about the inerrancy of God's Holy Word, the Bible, and the marvelous words of comfort this infallible book affords the grieving. He quoted a few treacley poems, but never in the entire service was a single verse from the Bible read.

a blaze. Sue would have loved it! She always said her coattail would catch on fire when she died. Among the pallbearers were her nephew Jim Blount and his sister Adaline's husband, who was Episcopalian. When the two came down the aisle of the church, the brother-in-law started to genuflect before going into the pew, but Mr. Blount caught him before he got all the way down. He thinks Aunt Sue herself set the fire because she was going to be carried out of her beloved Baptist church by a genuflecting Episcopalian!⁴ Kathryn Easom was impressed into service in the choir that day because few choir members had showed up, and she told everyone the fire was her fault for impersonating a choir member.

There was a repeat of this incident a few years later, in 1965, after Mr. Bussey had come. An elderly single woman had died—Miss Lucy Ellis, a woman who said people might call her "Miss" but she hadn't missed anything, and the devil was going to come get her when she died. During the ceremony the electronic chimes in the choir room shorted out and began smoking. Once again, the fire department showed up at the funeral, and her friends had a laugh.⁵

FBC has never had its own cemetery, as many small country churches do. But in recent years, city churches have begun constructing columbaria, where the cremated remains of members may be put to rest on the church premises. Some years ago retired pastor Bussey began pressing for this, and due to his persistence and the generosity of several individuals and families, as well as the donated talent of retired architect Lyman Laughinghouse and retired building contractor Mickey Little, it has now been constructed. Charles Barnes did the basic design. The committee charged with seeing to its construction was the only committee on which Bill Bussey ever served after leaving the pastorate. The first remains to be placed in it were those of Mike Maclaga, who died February 18, 2003. Mike was a serious hunter, and some of his remains were scattered on the grounds of his hunting club. That way, he said, he'd never have to pay dues for being there again. The rest were preserved for placement in the columbarium, which at that time was still to be completed.

The church owns a handsome pall which is used at funerals if the family desires. It is placed over the casket during the service and as it is carried from the church. It is a handsome red-and-white covering with a bold cross in its design. This was a gift in 1975 from Janie Griffin, who appreciated fine things but disliked expensive funerals. Pastor Bussey explained in the newsletter that the pall could be used instead of expensive floral arrangements

^{4.} E-mail from Jim Blount, February 12, 2009.

^{5.} The stories of the two fires at weddings and the two fires at funerals may sound suspicious and conflated, but I have verified each of them.



Mike Maclaga, first person whose remains were deposited in the FBC columbarium (Faye McLaga King)

and for covering the casket itself, making the expense of the casket a purely private matter. Janie herself did not use it; she donated her body to medical science. Since the columbarium was constructed, a pall has been available for services where an urn is used for cremated remains. Ours was fashioned by the indefatigable Charles Barnes.

In the decades surrounding the founding of FBC in 1860, the death of children was commonplace. Some folks lived to proud old age, but living through infancy and childhood was the first barrier. Every kid had playmates or siblings or cousins who died. Children prayed, "If I should die before I wake / I pray the

Lord my soul to take." The grief on such an occasion was just as intense then as now, but it happens so seldom now that the sorrow stands out with dark defiant menace. Such was the occasion in August 1987, when young Cameron Bennett was in a young friend's home and accidentally shot himself with a handgun kept on a bedpost. Mr. Bussey had only recently baptized him. The church was filled for the funeral, the most emotional that Mr. Bussey ever conducted. Burdette Robinson, who assisted, remembers it as his most difficult experience in ministry. Every mention of the name "Cameron" brought forth sobs. One wonders how Dr. William Hooper (chapter 5) would have handled it. Cameron's sixth-grade class donated a memorial to their friend; it lies beside the playground at the church, facing the parking lot.

Mr. Baucom had a hard one to deal with on Tuesday, May 3, 1949. Two days earlier, four Coon High School students had been out on Silver Lake when their boat began to fill with water. One, eighteen-year-old Lewis W. Hardie, Jr., drowned. The local fire department tried unsuccessfully for two hours to revive him. The funeral was at FBC, with Dr. Harold J. Dudley, pastor of First Presbyterian, joining Pastor Baucom in presiding.

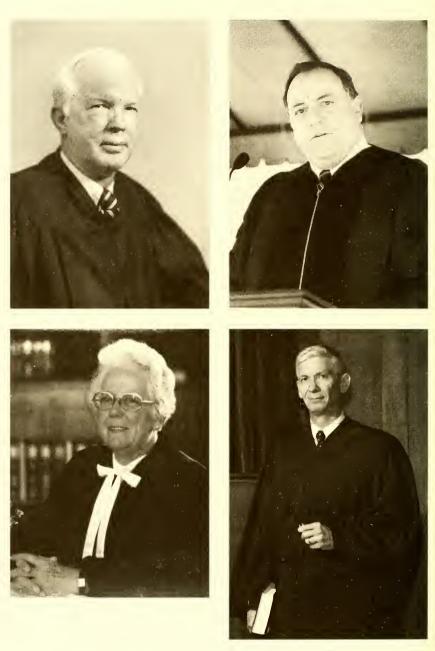
Suicide victims are always difficult funerals. Angeline Quick, who grew up in our church, was one of them. She had at one time worked in New York with Don Hinshaw's music firm, but in 1978, the year of her death, she was working in the college library and attending some classes. We have already

^{6.} One of the most moving political cartoons I remember seeing pictured a little girl kneeling beside her bed praying these words while the blitz of London was going on.

spoken of Willard Moss's funeral (chapter 19). Jim Jarrard conducted three funerals of suicides in his ministerial career, and recalls trembling at two of them.

In recent years, FBC has been the scene of funerals of some prominent people. Janie Davis Griffin, a lady of wealth and sophistication, died at age ninety-eight in 2007. She had been a grande dame of Wilson society for decades, but she had outlived her friends, and not that many people attended her funeral. Dr. Herman F. Easom died at 103. He helped establish the Eastern North Carolina Sanatorium and did pioneering work in pulmonary diseases in the state; at meetings of the national Tuberculosis/Respiratory Disease Institute, there is a Herman F. Easom Distinguished Lecture. And he was a member of the search committee that brought William R. Bussey to FBC. Had he died forty years earlier, the church would have been packed, but by the time he passed away in 2005, not that many people, even in the medical community, had known him. By contrast, when Ida Ruth Owens died in a car crash in 2005 at age sixty-two, the church was packed and running over. She was not famous, but she had friends of all ages and all stations all over Wilson, and her unexpected passing brought them out. When Judge Naomi Morris, one of the founding members of the North Carolina Court of Appeals, nominated by Gov. Dan Moore, died in 1986, much of state government was here. When Associate Justice of the North Carolina Supreme Court Lewis Meyer died of brain cancer in 1999, once again the church was filled with respectful mourners. Governor Hunt spoke to a packed church. When his older and ailing colleague on the bench John Webb passed on in 2008, many did not remember him, and state government and the legal community did not

7. The institute's program for 2007 introduced the series with these words: "Dr. Herman Easom devoted most of his professional and personal life to the prevention of lung disease, particularly tuberculosis, silicosis, and asbestosis. Through his quiet efforts over seven decades, the quality of life improved for many North Carolinians. This named lecture acknowledges his contributions and assures their remembrance—a legacy for the future. His career is legendary in North Carolina public health. He served as director of the state's Occupational Health Department from 1935 to 1944, and from its inception in the 1930s through the program's end in 2000, Dr. Easom served as chest consultant and chair of the Advisory Medical Committee for the Dusty Trades Program, North Carolina Occupational Surveillance Unit. He was the clinic physician and medical director of the North Carolina Sanatorium in Eastern North Carolina from 1942 to 1975 and served as a volunteer and held the office of president of the American Lung Association of North Carolina, Tar River Region, and the State Board from 1948 to 1986. He read X-rays for the TB Control Program twice a month for more than sixty years, until the age of one hundred. Born on October 4, 1902, he was the longest-serving public health employee in North Carolina before he passed away December 16, 2005, in Wilson County at the age of 103."



Four noted figures of the judiciary who were members of FBC. Clockwise from top left: John Webb, associate justice, NC Supreme Court (FBC), Louis Meyer, associate justice, NC Supreme Court (Evelyn Meyer, © Campbell University), Thomas Milton Moore, Federal Bankruptcy Court (Frances Moore, © Raines & Cox), and Naomi Morris, NC Court of Appeals (Jackie Brooks)

feel moved to turn out in great force. The moral of this is: if you want a big attendance at your funeral, die before your time, preferably unexpectedly. Be assured, too, that your pastor and your family would appreciate any wishes you might have about your farewell rites to be known and on file.

After the death of a mutual friend some years ago, Al Grissom was talking to some folks about how fast his friends were dying off, to the point that it was beginning to look like he wouldn't have any friends left to attend his funeral. Lester Quick, who was at least twenty years older than Al, said kindly, "Al, I'll come to your funeral."



Vernon Wall (Betty Wall)

Vernon Wall's funeral and burial in September 1997 was conducted by Doug Murray. Vernon was a professional psychologist and counselor, with a seminary background at Southeastern. He and his wife Betty were loyal members of FBC, and Vernon was a faithful choir member. He loved to take off on weekends for his place at Minnesott Beach, where he kept a boat he called *Prozac* (because it was a tranquilizer), but he always returned to sing in the choir on Sunday. His favorite time of day was dawn, when he could greet the day while the thin morning light was vibrant with birdsong. Before Vernon passed away of esophageal cancer, he gave his wishes for his final rites. He wanted his funeral to be at some normal time, out of consideration for friends who might want to come. But he wished to be buried at dawn the following day, gracefully excusing anyone who just didn't want to get up so early. His funeral was held at FBC at a normal time, but Clyde Patterson made it sound a bit like dawn by deftly working birdcalls into the organ music. The next morning a small group of friends gathered on a dismal gray morning at the gravesite in Maplewood. The pastor said his words, and the group held hands in a circle around the grave, singing "Morning Has Broken." The sun then pierced the clouds, a shaft of light broke brightly down on the scene, and a flock of birds flew twittering overhead, upward and away.

^{8.} Mr. Quick was born in 1900. If his family was Baptist, his pastor in 1910, when they were living in Manning, SC, would have been C. W. Blanchard.



Appendix A

Poetry by Needham Bryan Cobb and William Hooper

[Untitled]

Should I today be taken from this world,
And laid away in some neglected spot,
To wail in silence till that awful day
When God shall call his ransomed people home,
Would I be missed?

I know my wife would grieve to see me die, My children too would gather round my bier, And with their mother weep at their great loss, But then from others' homes and hearts and plans Would I be missed?

If saved from hell I know 'tis all by grace,
For naught I've done commends me to thy care.
If these poor eyes e'er see the Father's face,
Thy love, not mine, Thy toils, Thy sufferings
Will bring me there.

-NEEDHAM BRYAN COBB

Missionary Hymn
Tune: SCOTLAND

Go, carry, ye heralds, the news of salvation,
As Christ has enjoined you, to all the creation;
We would not detain you, tho' heart-strings are breaking,
For the life of lost brethren your country forsaking;
Dear, dear are the friends and the home you are leaving,
But you bear to whole nations the bliss of believing.

"To you it is given to suffer" and labor,
Placed foremost in battle—chief mark of his favor—
Oh! how sweet the reflection, the joy, oh, how thrilling!
That to bear *all* for *Him*, He hath made you so willing
That scourgings, and prisons, and death cannot shake you;
Stand firm on the promise, "I will not forsake you."

In your hands the Saviour the honor reposes
To change the wild desert to gardens of roses;
Where late grew the brier, to make spring the myrtle;
Change the wolf to the lamb and the kite to the turtle;
The infant unharmed with the cockatrice playing,
All heaven with joy the sweet vision surveying.

Blest eyes that shall witness the glad transformation; Blest tongues that shall publish the sound of salvation; Blest feet that shall carry the news of God's pity, And guide back the wand'rers to heaven's bright city; Those wand'rers by thousands to Christ shall ye gather The heritage promised the Son by the Father.

Be with them, oh, Jesus! To life's latest hour, For Thine is the kingdom, the glory, the power: Unstop the deaf ear, to the sightless give vision, Bring forth hosts of captives from Satan's foul prison; Lo! the night is far spent, and the morn is appearing, All the crowns of the earth for thy brow are preparing.

-WILLIAM HOOPER, WILSON, NC

^{1.} Turtle: turtle-dove, as in Song of Solomon 2:12 KJV.

^{2.} Cockatrice: a legendary snake that could kill with its glance. Methinks Dr. Hooper is showing off here.

Appendix B

Funeral Sermon for Carter Lindsay

W. Carter Lindsay was buried in the churchyard of First Baptist Church in Columbia, South Carolina, after funeral services there that day, July 14, 1913. Remarks given by the officiant, the Rev. C. C. Brown of Sumter, South Carolina, were reported in *The State* the next day. The following is an excerpt.

It would be a work of supererogation for me to seek to present an analysis of Dr. Lindsay's character here among you who know and loved him. Love despises analysis and takes hold of what pleases it.

Dr. Lindsay never had a strong body. He repeatedly said he was long past due in the grave.

In him it was shown that not the body, but the heart and soul made the man. Love shone from his eyes and the hearty clasp of his hand told one of the warm heart gushes which were distilled from his finger tips. His easiest task was to make friends, and when once made they were his—his forever. In this congenial labor of making friends, he tilled his own fields and then gleaned in the corners of his neighbor's fields. Some of those who loved him best and who sit today under the shadow of this great sorrow, were not his church members—some perhaps were not members of any church. Lindsay caught them up and dragged them along with him and made them love him by the sheer impetuosity of his own love—by the greatness of his heart—by a childlike simplicity—by a genial something which constantly hung as a halo about his face.

His health would never allow him to pore over books and

burn midnight oil: but this handicap did not hold him back. His mind and method of work were unique and original. His forte lay in drawing pulpit pictures—charcoal sketches. At times his imagination seemed to be on fire, and then it was that word-pictures tumbled from his tongue readymade—pictures you could carry home with you to be hung up in your memory room. All of you have them. And you must keep them. They will soften and prove more beautiful as the years are gliding by, and some of the pictures he made for you here may appear again in fadeless colors in the life to come.

He was an interpreter of God. To him, Jesus was just as real as his mother ever was. He loved to talk with him and about him and to hold him clasped in the arms of his faith. He and his Lord were chums.

I am glad he went as he did without pain, without the long months of weariness and suffering, and that last night God stole so softly into his bedchamber and kissed his breath away.

The life and death of such a man are a sign of our immortality. I knew his old body was perishing. I used to mark it from time to time. But the real beauties of the man—the graces of his heart and soul—they continued to multiply to the end. . . . A heart like his—a life spirit in growing graces—just wants time to grow thus. Some of you are trying here in Columbia to cultivate a banana or an orange tree—a subtropical fruit. Winter kills it, and you say it just needed a little more time and a little more sunshine. God will give him time in the fair summerland and Lindsay will continue to produce graces of soul forever.

Appendix C

T. W. Chambliss's Tribute to Willard Moss

The Moss family preserves a clipping, apparently from the *WDT*, of a tribute titled "Willard Moss (a Friend)" that T. W. Chambliss wrote after Moss's death. The microfilms of the *WDT* are incomplete for this period, so the clipping cannot be dated, but it surely appeared a day or two after the funeral. Before the microfilming a fire at the newspaper destroyed issues from 1912 to 1918 and spotty groups of later issues.

Willard Moss is dead. The words on a telegraph blank stunned me. Only a few days previously he had stood and talked with me in my office.

For eleven years I had known Willard Moss, known him intimately and personally. We had spent many hours together, we had worried over vexing problems, we had planned and played together. I knew his sterling character; his big heart; his love for God and his love for men. He was my friend. I loved him and I knew he loved me. During four consecutive years, hardly a day passed without a conversation. I knew him. Now he is dead.

It is my wish to pay him a little tribute. Wilson people knew Willard Moss, some of them knew him longer, but none knew him any better than I did. To me he had opened his heart—in a true brotherly fashion, hiding no weaknesses and covering no faults. He was frank with me—I was with him.

Willard Moss was true—to his friends and to his God. His faith was simple and childlike; constant and gentle, pure and strong. To his church and denomination, Willard Moss was always a loyal servant, giving of his time and means liberally. The

First Baptist church of Wilson used him, not in one capacity alone, but in many. As superintendent of the Sunday school for a long time; as financial secretary of the church for years, as a deacon, active, earnest and constant, for many years—the Wilson church found him always ready. Trials never weakened his faith; obstacles never produced doubt; failure merely doubled his effort. He was an optimist—all the days—until disease weakened him.

In his home, to [his] wife and his boys and his relatives Willard Moss was always the tender, loving husband, father, and friend. He loved intensely and his devotion to his family was well known to his acquaintances. It seemed that his constant thought was of those in his household, he would always protect, cheer, care for them to the limit of his ability—that was his purpose and he fulfilled it.

Now the end of his life has come. His place is vacant and sorrow reigns. Wilson people, hundreds of them, will miss his presence and hundreds of hearts suffer because of his going.

Appendix D

Resolution of April 25, 1920, on the Deaths of Willard Moss and A. D. McGowen

Inasmuch as this church has in recent months been called upon to give up two of its most useful, honored, and beloved deacons, brethren W. M. Moss and A. D. McGowen, we desire to record in simple but heartfelt words our appreciation of their worth and our consciousness of the severe loss that befell us in their going.

First, We would bear testimony to the high integrity, uprightness, and strength of their Christian character. They were men of conscience, of conviction, of consistency. They lived the religion of their Lord and Savior and their daily walk and conversation was as becometh the people of God.

Second: As fellow-Christians and members of this church they were a continual source of comfort, strength, and inspiration to all of us. Providence permitting, they were ever in their places in the sanctuary, they gladly bore their part and often more than their part in all the burdens, duties, and undertakings of the church, and they had always for their brethren the kind word, the hearty fellowship, the loving sympathy that mark the true and greathearted servants of the Lord.

Third: In the high and responsible position of deacons they deserved and received the sincere esteem, confidence and love of their fellow members. In the words of Scripture, "They have used the office of a deacon well and purchased to themselves a good degree and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus."

Fourth: We sorrow deeply over our great loss in the death of these brethren, but we bow in submission to Him who is the great Head of the church and who doeth all things well. The memory of their lives and labors with us will be precious to us, an inheritance that we shall ever lovingly treasure. Though dead they yet speak unto us, and the great and blessed message that shines forth from their lives is the echo of those words of the Lord which they themselves had kept: "Be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee a crown of life."

Fifth: We desire that this paper shall be made a part of our permanent church records, and that copies of it be sent by the clerk to the families of our deceased brethren.

-T. F. PETTUS, CLERK

Appendix E

Roster of FBC Members Known to Be Veterans of World War I

Our Civil War veterans were named in chapter 3. There seem to have been no members of our church involved in the war with Spain. Those in service during World War II are memorialized on the large plaque on the Park Avenue side of the narthex. This page will have to be the memorial for our World War I veterans. It is as complete as I can make it, but I suspect a couple of names are missing. I regret that I have not been able to find a reliable way to identify our people who served in Korea or Vietnam or later conflicts.

Atkins, T. R.

Blount, George

Bullock, Guy (Navy)

Burden, Clifford

Cousins, L. R.

Daniels, Leon

Griffin, H. Russell (Navy)

Jones, Vaden

Killette, Edwin

Killette, Wiley

Patrick, B. L.

Peele, Ben R.

Pool, R. Bruce

Rice, Willie

Strickland, Isaac

Tatum, G. H.

Turlington, Jesse

Weaver, G. A.

Appendix F

List of FBC Pastors and People from FBC Who Have Been Ordained to the Ministry

PASTORS OF WILSON BAPTIST CHURCH/FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

William Hooper, 1867–1870 W. Carter Lindsay, 1870-1871 (Thomas R. Owen), 1871–1872 George W. Newell, 1872-1873 Thomas R. Owen, 1874-1880 Joseph E. Carter, 1880–1882 William T. Jones, 1882-1883 James M. McManaway, 1883–1887 Thomas P. Lide, 1888–1889 Miles S. Read, 1889-1890 Henry W. Battle, 1890-1892 John E. White, 1892-1893 James A. Mundy, 1893–1895 John A. Rood, 1896–1897 William H. Reddish, 1897-ca. 1900 John Jordan Douglass, ca. 1902-1904 John T. Jenkins, 1904–1909 James M. Dunaway, 1909?-1910 Charles W. Blanchard, 1910–1912 T. Williams Chambliss, 1912–1916 J. Marcus Kester, 1916–1919 Isaac Morton Mercer, 1919–1927

A. Paul Bagby, 1928-1931

(Thomas R. Owen), 1865–1867

W. Oscar Blount, 1931–1933 Hugh A. Ellis, 1933–1943 Clyde E. Baucom, 1943–1961 William R. Bussey, 1962–1988 James L. Jarrard, 1989–1994 Douglas E. Murray, 1995–

PEOPLE FROM FBC WHO HAVE BEEN ORDAINED TO THE MINISTRY

Needham Bryan Cobb, May 6, 1860 George Newell, June 30, 1872 Sidney A. Edgerton, November 5, 1911 James O. Mattox, April 11, 1923 George W. Blount, June 13, 1926 Ollin J. Owens, February 17, 1935 Kermit Combs, July 29, 1937 Marion T. Lineberger, July 11, 1954 Charles A. Webster, Jr., May 7, 1961, Clemson, SC Steve Bradley, May 21, 1972, Bear Grass Presbyterian Chuck Miller, July 31, 1977 Linwood Bratcher, May 20, 1984, FBC N. Wilkesboro Raygina Beale, October 2, 1993 Cipriano Moreno Velásquez, November 14, 1993 Tom Riley, January 6, 2002 Steve Flowers, May 5, 2005 Brad Jones, March 28, 2004, FBC Valdese Steve Clayton, October 4, 2009



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There is no end to the writing of books, and too much study will wear you out.

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